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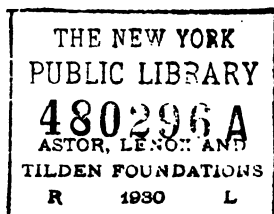
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COMRADES.

CHAPTER I.

BIRD OF PASSAGE.

IN the rolling country overlooking the Patapsco River stands Shandy Hall, in the rigid, architectural simplicity of early days, when the Monumental City at its feet was a village, adjacent to the estates of the Carrolls and Howards, who followed the hounds, where now is heard the din of traffic.

On an evening in the spring of 1857 the family group, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Grason, and daughter Leila, a girl of fifteen years, was assembled on the portico, to enjoy the breeze that came from the river on its cooling mission.

The repose of nature was not shared by them. A discontented expression brooded over the face of the gentleman, and his wife's sad countenance proclaimed domestic trial. The daughter's brow also was clouded, for even her young life was oppressed by the burden which her father was outpouring of the day's doings. As he paused to sigh, the wife pleaded: "My dear, why worry about town affairs? Leave them there, and court the tranquillity of home, this lovely evening; you will be the better able to meet the perplexities of to-morrow."

"Tranquillity!" exclaimed Mr. Grason, "perplexities are insuperable, being attendant on the efforts I have to make to support our home, and for these efforts there

is a want of appreciation on the part of the outside world and a dearth of sympathy at home." His shaggy brows contracted into a deeper frown, as he nursed his discontent.

"Oh, that I had a fortune to bestow on him!" his wife thought. "Would it propitiate? No! the trouble is within himself."

The daughter, equally generous and more hopeful, placed her arms about her father's neck, and exclaimed: "Poor papa! it distresses us to see you worried; we will economize. Indeed our hearts are full of sympathy for you."

The sternness of the parent remained impenetrable to the endearing caress, his mouth was compressed and his eye wore a far-off stare, for he ignored present amenities, and looked beyond on troubles to come while brooding over those that had past.

"The family may prate of sympathy," he rejoined, "and yet they forget the burden of domestic ingratitude. Every thought of that boy Clinton is like a stab. Instead of becoming my pride at the Bar and my assistant, he is an idle rover."

"Oh, papa!" exclaimed Leila, "how can you speak so! Brother does not fancy your profession; why condemn him for not following it? He has no need to do so."

Mrs. Grason, dreading that opposition would intensify her husband's mood, significantly glanced at Leila. Fortunately, just then a diversion occurred: the Roman Catholic priest, whose rectory nestled in the neighboring hills, walked up the avenue.

This opportune caller, Father Littig, had recently assumed charge of the parish. The Hall was a pleasant place to visit, and its ladies, as converts to his church, were subjects of especial consideration. Also, he en-

joyed intercourse with the host, who was entertaining when in the vein. The priest, however, was not blinded to the eccentricities of his neighbor; these he regarded not as psychological conditions, but as moral obliquities, affording a field for the labor of the churchman, though not by trailing ecclesiastical robes in his presence, but by genteel social approaches. On the present occasion his visit was like a ray of sunshine across the gloom, and Mr. Grason was soon engaged in an argument regarding the Baconian claim to the authorship of Shakespeare's plays.

They were in the midst of the discussion when a youth stepped lightly upon the portico. His off-hand greeting was affectionately acknowledged by the ladies, but Mr. Grason only freezingly nodded; with tact, his wife hastened to introduce to the priest the new caller as Mr. Clinton Grason.

"You must be a stranger, sir," remarked the priest, "or in my wanderings I should have met with you."

"I have been abroad," the young man replied.

"Until recently he has not been with us since your coming," Mrs. Grason remarked. "We count on you to help us to reform his wandering ways."

"Father Littig will scarcely have the opportunity now," Clinton answered, "for I am on the eve of departure, and called this evening to say good-by."

"He will never rest," growled the elder Grason, "until he shall be half-killed in some adventure, then he may come home to be nursed, and possibly appreciate his kindred."

The ladies dreaded lest this outbreak might be followed by a violent eruption; but such perturbed spirits are usually gifted with subtile judgment that respects moral and physical force, and reserves anger to be vented on the feeble.

"Should Father Littig estimate my deserts," Clinton ventured, "he may entertain a poor opinion of me; I crave his charity."

"An ill-used poet, who had reason to know," his father rejoined, "has left on record that 'Christian charity' is a rarity; do not expect it."

"In youth love of novelty is as natural as that the sparks fly upward," the priest remarked.

"Scholars of your cloth should not pervert the Scriptures," the host interrupted; "you know that the persecuted old man credited with the expression referred to *trouble*."

"I am convinced," the other persisted, "that He who made the earth beautiful designed us to be happy; and it is our duty to cherish cheerfulness. The young of all animals are frolicsome; man forms no exception. I sympathize with Mr. Clinton in his love of travel, not only on account of the variety thus afforded, but because one may enjoy the comforts of home while annihilating time and space."

"I sometimes select the old-fashioned way of journeying on horseback," Clinton observed, "though at the risk of being considered behind the age."

"I declare, Clinton!" Leila exclaimed, "it is a strange taste, to be jogging over the country; you should have lived in the last century. Be sensible and go in the cars."

"Time is not a consideration," her brother persisted; "why adopt a hurrying conveyance, with its dust, noise, jostling crowd, insolent officials and arbitrary routes?"

"It is a strange fancy for the howling wilderness," was the rejoinder.

"At any rate," the amused priest added, "you are not a *fast* young man," and he remarked with growing interest the shapely brow over which rich brown hair

negligently hung, and the firm lips that a slight mustache hardly covered, which afforded a wordless warning that the gentle, hazel eye might on occasion be kindled into dangerous fire.

"I have no desire to hurry through life with a speed that misses wayside beauties," Clinton answered.

"So wise, so young!" exclaimed the elder Grason.

The priest relieved the embarrassment occasioned by this paternal irony. "The young man," said he, "may hold the correct view. I have sometimes thought that, with all our economy of time, we fail to estimate its value as applied to business and pleasure. But is it necessary to seek the wilderness? Is not bypath roving equivalent to—

"Waste (of) sweetness on the desert air?"

"In desert wandering," Clinton rejoined, "we may gather flowers which else might

"——blush unseen."

But, father, I had hoped to find in you an approval of such—at least innocent tastes."

"I do approve and admire," the priest responded; "but it is early for you to turn from the world which, for youth, usually wears its fairest smile, and to be tempted *Childe Harold* like, into solitude. Why the fancy?"

"It dawned in boyhood," Clinton answered, and as if to escape sad memories or the priest's scrutiny, he arose and said "good-by;" and extending a hand to the clergyman, he expressed the hope that their acquaintance might be shortly renewed. A moment later he crossed a strip of moonlit walk, and was lost in the shadow beyond.

"So that restless bird of passage is off on another flight!" exclaimed the elder Grason; then pleading un-

finished writing, he retired into the house, leaving the guest to be entertained by the ladies.

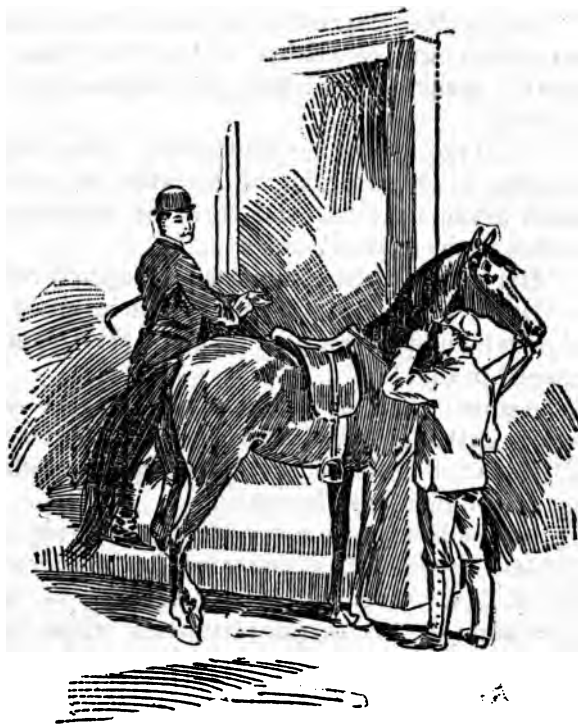
"That youth is an interesting character," Father Littig remarked in a meditative way. "He is young to have been warped by disappointment's school. Perhaps his oddity is due to crossed affection?"

"No, indeed," Leila laughed. "I am sure he is fancy free of all varieties of the fair sex; *Maud Mullers* and *Flora McFlimsys*, alike, stand a poor chance with brother."

"Having watched him from boyhood," Mrs. Grason added, "I think Clinton's peculiarities of character admit of other explanations. When I became a member of this family in the often thankless office of step-mother, this child" (placing an arm caressingly about Leila), "was old enough to have imbibed prejudice to the relationship; Clinton's recollections of his mother impressed his nature with reserve, which led to morbid fancies; this might have seemed natural, so far as concerned myself, but it was manifested also toward his father, whose busy life prevented special notice of the boy; I cannot but think also that this absence of sympathy and the father's peculiarities of temperament, added to the child's sensitiveness.

"Another circumstance in his history deepened the shadow. We were at the seaside; among the guests at the hotel was an English gentleman, a Mr. Bascomb, and his afflicted son. On one occasion the opportunity was afforded Clinton of saving the invalid from drowning, and the mutual attachment of the boys, which had already existed, deepened into ardent friendship, while Mr. Bascomb's gratitude for the truly gallant deed seemed unbounded. As a result Clinton accompanied them to England. The ailing child became worse and in the spring he died. The grief-stricken parent then





“Have Ranger at the door by six in the morning.”

petitioned that our boy be allowed to remain permanently with him, for the old gentleman had no one else to love or on whom to lavish his wealth. Clinton remained abroad six years, then Mr. Bascomb died, leaving the lad heir to a large and unencumbered estate."

"Such sudden acquisition of wealth was a dangerous temptation and calculated to turn the head of any youth," the priest remarked, as he deprecatingly shook his head.

"It did not prove so with Clinton," Mrs. Grason responded. "On returning to America he purchased a small estate near us, and there he unostentatiously resides in the intervals of travel."

"His is an attractive character," the priest remarked.

"He is an anomaly," Mrs. Grason rejoined; "none of us quite understand him. I know you will share our interest in him."

"Assuredly! he is a precious soul, and we earnestly seek to gather such into the fold of the Church."

"He is not of our belief," Mrs. Grason asserted; "he has no religious predilections."

"All the better—we approach an unprejudiced mind, and lead it to the faith which stands not on man's wisdom but on God's love." Adding a blessing he departed, meditating on his new acquaintance, whose sorrowing soul stood on the border, ready to receive a welcome into that Church where, more than in any other, the heavy laden are comforted by sacred ceremonials.

As the priest neared the rectory the object of his reflections, gained his own home. Resigning his beast to the smart mulatto groom, he directed: "Have Ranger at the door by six in the morning." Entering his library, the summons of a silver gong brought the housekeeper with an alacrity unlooked for in one of her ample proportions and advancing years.

"Breakfast at five, Sally," the master ordered.

"You ben't going awa' again, sir? Why, you are just come 'ome."

"Yes, Sally; and then you'll not have the bother of early breakfasts."

"Lord, sir! why should 'ee say thot? Them's no trouble, gin I could on'y keep you 'ome. I promised the old gen'l'man, rest 's soul! I'd sort o' look to you. How can I do 't, gin you's ever a rovin'?"

"Never mind; I'll settle down some of these days."

The master was not in a humor to indulge the house-keeper's loquacity; this she discerned and withdrew, muttering: "Sattle doon! that'll never be, 'tel ye get ye a wife, an' sak's alive! ye'll niver stop lang eno' in 'un place to do even thot."

Clinton, left to himself, recalled the priest. "I like him," he thought, "his face shows sympathy; perhaps I may invoke it." He then lapsed into a reverie that lasted late into the night.

CHAPTER II.

NATURE'S OWN.

ON the rounded summit of a mountain two figures were outlined against the pink and orange clouds that curtained the western sky. One was of a horse, whose shapely head and limbs revealed that he was not of the stunted stock native to the soil. With loosened rein he cropped the grass as though, with equine philosophy, he would set an example in economy of time to his master, who, standing in the mellow light, contemplatively gazed at the distant peaks which, as he watched them, changed from a rosy to a leaden hue, while the somber shadows in the valley noiselessly crept upward. Not until darkness had gathered over all did he turn away.

"Come, Ranger," he exclaimed, "or we shall not find our way out."

An opening was just discernible in the encircling woods; he strode to it and discovering a leaf-covered path, followed it with the accuracy of a trained woodsman. He had descended but a short distance ere he was arrested by a voice that came welling from below. Listening to its musical cadence, his ear was startled by the clearness, compass and control; as the last note echoed from the cliff, he mounted and resumed the descent with a reckless celerity that brought him so suddenly to a set of draw-bars across the path that he was obliged to jump his horse over them, confronting a

startled maid, while the cow that she had been milking, wildly careered across an inclosure.

"Excuse me!" exclaimed the rider, "it was thoughtless to jump the bars so hastily. I will go after the cow."

"You needn't ter keer 'bout that," responded the girl, "hit don't matter, I was gist strippen ef her." Swinging her pail into view, she showed that it contained as much milk as could have been expected of a scrub cow. Her motion attracted more closely the newcomer's attention to the maid, whose hazel eyes inquiringly gazed at him. Her ruddy face showed regularity of feature, rarely met among lassies of her class. Brown tresses, free from restraint, floated in wavy luxuriance about her shoulders; and what beauty she possessed was unadorned, for her attire consisted of a faded cotton dress, the brevity of which exposed bare feet and ankles, and displayed (considering her evident youth) a rarely developed form, while symmetry and grace proclaimed the freedom of rural life.

The traveler again addressed her:

"How far is it to the next house?"

"Nigh 'bout ten miles."

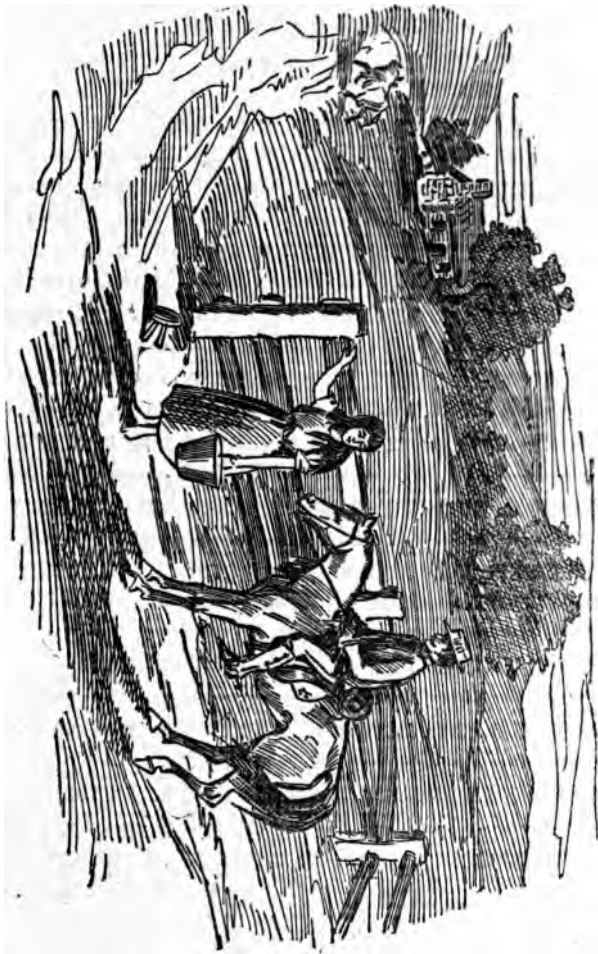
"It is too bad to have miscalculated in this way!" the lost tourist exclaimed; "and as there is no moon, it will be impossible to find the way."

"You must ha' kim from fur," the girl remarked.

"Since dinner about twenty miles and I expected to reach Shafer's tavern, so I came over the ridge instead of around it; 'twas hoping to make a short cut, but somehow I missed it."

"You'r' 'bout eight miles out o' the way, an' a wuss road than the one yu kem."

"I don't feel like going any further, so there's no help for it but to ask if I may stop here for the night,"



"How far is it to the next house?"

1

He glanced at the adjacent shanty as if to measure its capacity.

"I reckon ye kin; ef ye go on, ye're sure ter lose yerself; hit gits very dark in this holler." She glanced at the crags as if to verify the assertion, and then directed him to a rudely constructed stable.

The young man led his steed to the place indicated, and then with saddle-pockets across his arm, turned toward the cabin, which was a type of others to be found in primitive regions. It was built of rough-hewn logs, chinked with billets of wood and daubed with mud.

The maid awaited him at the door and in the interval since their parting she had undergone the metamorphosis of a clean calico frock, a tidy collar and fancy bow; also a ribbon held her rebellious tresses under some restraint. Clinton (who doubtless has been already recognized) noted the improvement, and he thought: "If only she would keep her mouth shut, and not spoil the effect by that horrid vernacular!" Vain hope! She, alive to her importance as hostess, thus greeted him:

"Ye kin come in an' sot down," and she ushered him into an apartment which occupied the ground floor, and with the exception of the loft constituted the only room in the house, and was required to serve various purposes, as the miscellaneous furniture indicated. While the girl prepared supper the guest was afforded opportunity for observation; and he was no less surprised by the objects that met his eye than he had been by the siren who so recently charmed his ear. A rug concealed the roughness of the floor, a costly curtain draped the window, where also hung a field glass. On the mantel ticked a gilded clock, ornamented in front by sporting Cupids in basso-relievo. At either side of the timepiece was suspended a revolver. One recess of the chimney was a miniature arsenal; for not less than half

a dozen rifles and shotguns were suspended from the wall in rude racks made of forked sticks. There leaned in the opposite corner a banjo and a guitar. "Was there ever such a mingling of rustic rudeness and of high art!" thought Clinton. The rough walls, the rude bedstead, the split-bottom chairs, contrasted strangely with bronze ornaments, that Clinton's experienced eye told him, were of foreign workmanship. What did it mean? The incongruity was not assuring. "I'm in for it," he thought; "the mystery may be solved when the other members of the family shall appear."

Again his attention was directed to the child, as she placed some wheaten cakes on the griddle; and as she put the tea in a quaint-looking earthen pot, and poured on it the boiling water, Clinton quoted:

" 'Unless the kettle boiling be,
Filling the teapot spoils the tea.' "

"I never heard that afore!" exclaimed the cook, as she lighted a lamp; and Clinton fell to scrutinizing her face, which her absorbing duties admitted of without embarrassment. Its attraction was more in expression than feature. "No evil dwells there," he thought, "however suspicious her surroundings."

At last supper being ready, she announced: "Ye kin lay to now."

"Will nobody join us?" Clinton inquired.

"No; mam she sot out to the sto' this mornin' an' hit's too fur to go an' kim all at onst. She'll stop at Aunt Polly's overnight, an' git back an hour by sun next day."

Could Clinton have foreseen the situation, he would have braved the darkness. It was too late now. She would not understand a departure and explanation was out of the question,

"Are you left alone often?" he asked.

"Every time pap goes away, mam's off to the sto', an' I'm by myself two days."

Again Clinton lapsed into reverie, which afforded his *vis-à-vis* the opportunity of returning his own critical inspection, for since her survey at the bars she had been too busy for even the gratification of curiosity. The perusal of his refined features was the revelation of a new type of manhood, awakening admiration and commanding respect.

"Shall I question this child?" thought Clinton. "The incongruous character of her surroundings and guardianship admit of investigation."

"Your tea's a-gittin' cold," she remarked; "p'raps hit don't suit?" With pride in her supper she was disappointed at the guest's neglect of it.

"Thank you," he said; "it's very nice, but so many of my meals are taken alone, I get into the habit of musing; but I need not now, with you for a companion. What is your name?"

"Alida—my last name's MacNeal."

"Alida sounds uncommon; where did you get it?"

"Sure I dunno, p'raps hit's fancy. What mout be your name?"

"I forgot about introducing myself. I am called Clinton. Have you always lived in this out-of-the-way place?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you never been away?"

"Not fur; I tramps over the mountains close to hum; an' when pap's horse is here I gits ter play with the Hefflers, but mam she never lets me go to the sto'."

"Can you read?"

"A little; but mam she never teaches me nothin'. She sleeps most of the time."

"How did you learn to read?"

"From them what comes hyar wi' pap, mostwise Henry Car; I've gone through 'Paul Clifford,' an' 'The Wandering Jew,' an' them's all the books hyar."

Thus Clinton gained scraps of her everyday history, until, the meal being finished, she was again occupied with domestic duties.

These ended, she seated herself on a cricket and her clasped hands rested idly in her lap. The repose formed a pleasing picture. As she raised her eyes her companion remarked: "I see you have a guitar will you play? One who sings as you do, surely can?"

"I wish I could," she answered, "but the strings is broke, an' pap he always forgits ter fetch ary mo' ;but here's the banjo, ef you keers for hit," and with neither mock diffidence nor boldness, but with pretty simplicity, she picked it in a way that produced more music from the homely instrument than Clinton had believed possible, while she sang "Home, Sweet Home" and "Robin Adair" with the ease of a forest warbler.

Clinton, while listening, took up the guitar, attracted by its inlaid workmanship, and noticed among its scroll work, the name "*Alida Lucett*." As she finished singing he asked: "How did you learn to sing?"

"I picked hit up from the men what comes hyar, an' Henry he guv me a song book."

"Do you get lonely?"

"Yes, sir, an' mor'n ever sence the guitar strings is broke."

"How do you pass the time?"

"Of days I works in the garden, or fetches wood, or wanders after wild flowers tel mam she calls, an' then I gits up my turn an' kims back. Mam, she says: 'Chile, will ye never git shut ef yer foolishness? Them flowers'll not feed ner warm ye.' "

"Are you ever lost while wandering about?"

She laughed as she replied: "I knows on which side ef de tree de moss grows, an' I has larned that the biggest bough ef de spruce is turned the yother way, an' then agin the top twigs ef the hemlock is bent to wha de sun kims over de mountain. How could I git lost wi' them things to p'int the way, even ef I didn't know the peaks?"

"In your wanderings have you tried to count the varieties of wild flowers, or thought what thousands are scattered over the hills?" He unfolded some of the wonders of the vegetable world, and in explaining the adaptations of plants to surrounding conditions he pointed out the wisdom that had established laws to govern their growth.

The child's mind seized the lesson with avidity. At last he exclaimed: "While we are talking of summer flowers, the autumn frosts may nip us—the fire is burning low;" and he reached for a log in the wood-box, but Alida was before him, and when the hearth was once more blazing, she sat tailor-fashion on the floor and eagerly looked into Clinton's face as one who, thirsting for knowledge, had caught its earliest draught.

"Go on, please," she said; "I never hearn of sech things afore; how I wish I had larnin'!"

Clinton, resuming the lesson, experienced a thrill of pleasure as he read an apt appreciation in her wondering eyes. He thought: "What a rare wild flower for bloom or blight, as breezes fair or foul may visit it!"

"What would you be doing if I were not here?" he asked.

"I sits on the flo', an' looks into the fire an' thinks ef de days as fur back as I kin remember, an' tries ter git at things way yonder, an' I seems ter dream ef long rows ef lamps; I kinnot count 'em, or tell what they is,

only I sees 'em, an' then I goes an' stands at the do', an' looks into the sky, an' thinks how bright them lamps is, that shines down on the dark mountains, an' I wonders ef hit's them is in my mind."

The thought being thus suggested that perhaps there was an opportunity to learn something of the mysterious luminaries, she requested that he would tell her about them. "I know you kin," she added, and in eagerness rested a hand upon his knee.

"'Tis little that any of us know," he replied. "Like yourself we are lost in wonder;" but he briefly narrated the popular views regarding our neighbors of the planetary system, the conjectures entertained of the luminous pathway across the heavens and of the wanderings of the comets. He told her of the earth's size and of that of the sun, and of the glorious King of Stars; then of the measureless miles through which in countless ages these marvels of the Universe have been coursing on the borders of the Infinite. As he finished, she buried her face in her hands and said:

"The head aches to think of hit!"

"It is scarcely worth while to try," Clinton rejoined; "but it is at least a pleasant contemplation that perhaps some of those shining worlds are to be our future homes, and it may be that even now the dear friends who have gone are there; for God has told us that we 'cannot conceive of the things which he has prepared for them that love Him. Now,'" he continued, as rising from his chair he stood on the hearth, "I've talked enough to tire you."

"No, indeed!" she replied; "I never should git tired ef sech talk," and as her face looked up into his, she added: "I've had the happiest evening I ever knew "

"That's a compliment!" replied Clinton, "but all pleasures must end; and as the day's ride was long I should like to 'turn in.' "

"Well! thar's a bed," she pointed to a roomy one, and with a "good-night!" she ascended the ladder-like steps to the loft.

Though Clinton was tired, the events of the evening had driven drowsiness away; his excited brain dwelt upon the incongruities of the cabin, the marvelous voice and simple character of the child hostess, whose even respirations as they reached him hrough the cracks in the floor assured him that she was wrapped in slumber.

"How limited must be her pleasures," he thought, "if my serious talk has afforded her the happiest evening she ever knew!" Curious possibilities regarding her chased one another through his brain. At last the improbable dreamings drifted into mental mist and then into blind oblivion.

CHAPTER III.

RECKONING.

THE sun was bright when Clinton awoke. His first care was to look to the condition of the chestnut. Returning from this duty, he met Alida at the door, who, with a "good-morning!" invited him to breakfast.

"I've taxed your patience," he said; "but you know we were star-gazing last night; then I was castle-building, and as a result of late hours I overslept myself."

Her look was puzzled, but shyness kept her silent as she led the way to the table, arranged with unusual neatness in honor of the guest. The effect did not escape Clinton's observation, and he remarked: "You have taken too much trouble for a lazy lodger!"

"It war no trouble; I'm often worked harder ner this."

"If your labor is so hard, your childhood must be a sad one?"

"I'm not sad. I runs about an' has plenty ef fun."

"Are there no children to play with?"

She shook her head as she answered: "There's not much company. Pap, he's not often hyar, an' when he is, he never notices me none; an' mam she dozes like, so I hain't got nary great chance to talk to her."

"Are not the men who come with your father company for you?"

"Henry, he's the onliest one what does take ary notice o' me, but then he worries me so." There was

no blush at the confession, and Clinton again questioned:

"What does your father do? He does not seem to be farming."

"He buys and sells things in town, but he comes and goes at all sorts o' times. He may be home fer a week, an' then all of a sudden is off ag'in; Henry an' Nat is mostly wi' him."

Thus Clinton gathered evidence of her surroundings and gained scrap of her everyday life; finally, breakfast no longer affording an excuse to linger, he arose from the table, as he said: "A day's ride is before me; I should have been off long ago."

"I'm sorry you'r leavin'," responded Alida. "Ef you'd stay I'd take you to the b'ar's den, hit's so wild that you kin hardly climb around the big rocks to git at hit; an' then we'd go to the buzzard's roost, on the highest crag, an' you kin look all over everywha', an' then mam she'll be to hum; I want her to see you."

Whether Clinton's vanity was flattered by the desire of the hostess to show him off to "mam" is questionable, for he felt that possibly it might be safer to visit the "b'ar" and the "buzzard" than to risk a reception from the old woman; he had good reason for suspecting that he might be far from welcome, and he had misgivings lest the innocent child would be held accountable for her hospitality. So he declined, and proceeded to the stable to saddle-up.

Alida joined him at the bars where he was with deliberation adjusting his trappings, as though seeking excuse to linger or to resolve a doubt; finally, as the conclusion was reached, he drew from his pocket a gold coin, saying as he handed it to her: "Here, hostess, is your reckoning; you have treated me right royally."

Alida placed her hands behind her, and retreating, drew her form to its full height, her kindling eye show-

ing evidence of temper, which Clinton hastened to soothe.

"Never mind!" he exclaimed, "I would not wound your feelings, I followed a custom which is usually acceptable to country folks in exchange for hospitality."

"What I has given hain't fer sale," she responded.

"Then receive this as a present;" disengaging a gold cross from his watch-chain, he attached it to a ribbon at her throat. She was disposed to draw back, but he persisted, remarking: "Wear it as a reminder of me. Good-by!" He extended his hand. She took it without response, for the blush of confusion was on her cheek and ere it faded he was gone. Thus they parted. She leaned pensively against the bars, listening to the retreating sounds of the horse's hoofs; he, as he journeyed, recalled the lines:

"She dwelt among the untrodden ways,
Beside the Springs of Dove;
A maid whom there was none to praise,
And very few to love."

With this poetic recollection, Clinton dismissed the subject with which it was associated, and enjoyed the bright day, as the horse dog-trotted with imperceptible celerity. Meeting with cultivated fields he was thinking himself well out of the wilderness, when he beheld, emerging from a side path, a raw-boned, sandy-haired, freckled-faced individual, who, from his wild appearance, must have been a denizen of said wilderness. Evidently he was on his way to mill, as he had a bag of corn, and the manner in which that was being toted was peculiar. Upon the back of a bull was a large sheepskin, and on top of this was girthed a fixture resembling a sawbuck, with the necessary spread to enable it to be adjusted to the broad back of the beast.

The bag of corn rested in the upper angles of the arrangement, and surmounting the whole was the driver, who, from his elevated position and by the aid of a long stick with which to guide the "critter," was enabled to

"Keep in de middle of de road."

To add to the grotesqueness of the "get up," the horns of the bull were enveloped in rags, as a preventive of the hollow-horn.

"How far is it to Noland's?" Clinton inquired.

The man stared at him, as though devoid of hearing and endeavoring by use of his eyes to supply the deficiency; and not until he had taken an inventory of every square inch of Clinton's person, did he find the use of his tongue, and then it was to ask the question, "Wha' mout you a kim from?"

"From back in the mountain," Clinton responded, nodding in the direction.

"Then you ere gist through MacNeal's territory. I reckon he wer'n't to hum, or he'd sartin have made you fork over the toll."

"Ah, indeed! Is that his way? You have not answered my question: How far is it to Noland's?"

"'Bout twenty miles, an' ef yer te kim back, take my advice, stranger, an' jog some yother road."

"Thanks for the warning, but you have excited my curiosity."

"Bein' as these parts ere unbeknown to you, I'll gist tell you, though we don't keer to blow on MacNeal, he's the wust man in all them regions; nobody keers to let up wi' him in the mountain."

"Is robbing his business?"

"That's gist hit. He don't sow no craps, and as he's

mostwise away we kalkilates he gather's sech as he doesn't sow hesef."

"Why do you think that he takes toll?"

"We's hearn tell of them what has come out wi' less than they took in, an' sometimes a chap goes in that never kims out."

"Has MacNeal a family?"

"Wall, thar's an ole 'ooman that kims to Firey Run sto', but she never ses nothin' an' sometimes we sees a gal santerin' on the hills, but nary a one kin git nigh her, she's shy as ary deer."

"She must be wild! but what could one expect, since she has such a father?"

"Nary a pap o' hern."

"Why do you think so?"

"Thar's a chap kims sometimes to the brandy camp, a'ter a jug ef speret," the native here gave a side toss with his head, accompanying the gesture with a knowing wink, "an' onst 'fore leavin' he had sampled enough to sot his tongue a-gwine, an' he tole us that the gal war none ef the ole man's, an' that he sot up a claim to her hisse'f; it appears as how him an' MacNeal had a sort ef scrimmage about her, an' that he guessed more 'n the ole fellow 'lowed."

The countryman quite reawakened an interest in the rustic maiden. But Clinton was unable to elicit anything further. The gossip had exhausted his store of information. Evidently the near neighbors knew but little of MacNeal's household. He was therefore not disappointed when the countryman tapped his beast on the off side with the long stick, accompanying it with "ha! giup!" and turned into an intersecting lane. Suddenly a doubt seized him regarding the character of his questioner. After all, he might be a government fellow, looking up the very "moonshine" information

so imprudently let slip, and he called out: "But I say, you ain't no rev'nu' officer, is you?"

"No," responded Clinton; "your brandy camp does not concern me, and it would be poor return for your warning that I should prove informer."

The scraps of information just picked up, meager though they were, rekindled Clinton's curiosity in his late hostess; the intimation of danger but whetted his spirit of adventure, and he determined to revisit the mysterious cabin on the return trip.

It was yet early afternoon when his attention was directed to a lane which, at an angle, intersected the road he traveled, and where a cloud of dust and clatter of hoofs announced a cavalcade in holiday attire, dashing along, the wild yells of the men mingling with the laughter of the girls.

Clinton quickened Ranger's pace, and timed it so as to meet the head of the column, now in a frantic race, as it entered the main road; and keeping with the leader he inquired: "What's up?"

"We ere ridin' fer the bottle." With a whoop the man planted his heels into the flanks of the gelding, whose eyes shot defiance as his ears went back and his tail up, and he stretched out as though determined to die in his tracks, ere he would permit the sleek chestnut to pass him. Still the thoroughbred stayed there, while his rider continued to interrogate.

"There's been a wedding up the road," was the reply, "and we are now a-ridin' fer the bottle on the way to Noland's, wha' the best man's pap gives a blow out." As if reminded afresh of the goal, he redoubled his persuasions on the now panting pony. Ranger kept to his work.

"What is riding for the bottle?" again Clinton asked.

"There's a chap about a mile further, a holdin' ef a bottle o' whisky, and we're all a-ridin' after hit; him that gits tha' fust totes hit back to the bride, who takes a pull and then all the crowd jines in, and drinks her health; ag'in we git to Noland's we'll hang up fer the night and have a dance; but, stranger, I hain't got no time fer to talk, they's a kitchin' up."

"Well, take the lead, you'll win the bottle; I'll keep behind."

"No, you kin jine in, stranger; that bottle's open to all comers."

"Thank you! but the victory shall be yours."

A short brush brought the prize within the rustic's grasp, and with an exultant flourish he rode back. Under the exhilaration that followed, Clinton was invited to participate in the entertainment.

He was soon on friendly footing with the "natives"; the young men felt that he was a good fellow, while the winner of the bottle, attributing that success to his forbearance, asserted that he was a "regular brick."

The new guest, however, joined in the revels only long enough to prove his appreciation of their hospitality, and then quietly sought his own apartment; but the noise below stairs kept him awake; his thoughts again reverted to the mountain cabin, the glowing embers, the marvelous voice, and above all to the innocent face that earnestly had gazed into his own.

CHAPTER IV.

ASPIRATIONS.

AFTER the clatter of Ranger's ironed hoofs had died away, Alida lingered at the bars, gazing where the form of her late guest had vanished. Hitherto whatever of good she had gathered had been by contact with nature, from which she caught the notes of the woodland warbler, learned her laughter from the babbling brook, and borrowed beauty from the graceful pine, that

“—moulded her maiden form
By silent sympathy.”

The flowers of spring, the summer calm, the autumn dyes, and winter's spotless robe had each imparted to her something of its character; but until now she had learned nothing of human refinements to stamp an intellectual impress, nor of the moral power that sheds a fadeless loveliness.

Her intercourse with Clinton was the dawning of a new era. The spark of knowledge he kindled revealed her dark path, and awakened vague disquiet. Throughout the day she pursued her avocations, but her song no longer echoed from the hill and when, with the lengthening shadows her mam returned, the child's subdued manner was apparent to even her blunted sensibilities.

A fortnight later, as the old woman sat by the fire

enjoying her pipe, Alida asked, "Mam, do you think there's ary chance ef my going to school?"

"Laws, child! what put that into your head?" the crone exclaimed.

"I'm old eneaf to be learnin' somep'n."

"You's learned eneaf, an'll be hankerin' a'ter things that's no good. You'd be a heap happier ef you couldn't read nary a bit. Ef I'd a had my way you never should a started hit."

"Don't say that, mam, fer I was gist gwine ter axe yer ter git pap ter send me ter school."

"Gal, you've lost yer wits; hit would be more 'n my life's worth ter breath sech a thing." In her excitement the pipe dropped from her hand, and Alida, stooping to recover it, exposed the cross, which reflected the firelight and glittered upon her bosom.

"Wha's that yer got?" her companion inquired. "Some foolishness of Henry Car's, I s'pose?"

"No, Henry hain't got nothin' ter do wi' hit," and a blush suffused her face.

"Then who has?" The imperative tone failed to alarm Alida, who gazed steadily at her mam as she replied: "A young man who kem hyar 'bout dark when you was gone ter the sto', an' axed ef he mout hang up fer the night."

"An' you 'lowed him ter?"

"Of course! he was lost, was fur off his road, hit war nigh 'bout dark, an' I didn't see no reason why he shouldn't stay."

"Well, your pap 'll be in a tarin' rage ef he finds hit out; he don't 'low no prowlin' about hyar, an' I warns yer never ter let him know."

The girl, tossing her head indignantly, replied: "I hain't afeared ef pap, and shan't trouble myself ter hide hit; there was nary reason why the man shouldn't stay."

"I tell you your pap he'll have a reason. How kem you by the cross?"

"When the man war 'bout ridin' off, he started ter pay, but I wouldn't have no money, so he tuck the thing off his chain; an' gev hit ter me."

"I 'low that war genteel, yet you shouldn't have tuck hit, but no harm 'll kime ef yer keeps yer mouth shet, nor don't 'low yer pap ter see hit. The best way 'll be ter let me keep the thing."

"I shan't hide ner part wi' hit. He told me ter always w'ar hit," was Alida's determined response.

"Who's he that you should be a-mindin'? I never knowed yer ter be so 'begint."

"He's nothin' 't all ter me; I never seed him 'fo an' sha'n't never see him ag'in, but I'll let that cross stay hyar, fer he looked kinder at me than ary one else ever done."

"You always was a wilful gal, an' mostwise has yer way, but never let yer pap know that there's been ary stranger 'bout; ef yer do, he'll take on as yer never seed; it'll be a sorry day fer yer; he'll most kill yer!"

"Let him try!" the girl exclaimed, and her eye shot defiance as she arose to her full height; "I never was feared ef him; I've done nothing ter be feared 'bout, an ef he don't like the way I does, let him send me ter school an' be shet ef me."

"There you are again, hammerin' 'bout school; that chap's put hit into your foolish head. Why didn't you tell me ef him afo'?"

The question was lost in boisterous laughter and noisy steps from without. The door flew open, and three forbidding-looking persons entered.

"Come, hustle!" exclaimed the eldest, whose burly form and brutal face justified the old dame's fear.

"Hustle and git supper; we're starved. Henry, fetch

that jug out of the wagon; a nip 'll warm us, the fire ain't much. What sort o' comfort is this for fellows? Alida, stir your stumps and fetch a turn of wood."

The individual addressed as Henry, was a stout young fellow, whose face wore a devil-may-care look, and the alacrity with which he went for the jug suggested an appreciation of its contents. Returning in time to hear the order about the wood, he hastily resigned the spirit, and exclaimed: "I'll go, Alida; the logs is too heavy for the likes of you to be a-toting," and he darted forward to embrace the object of admiration as prepayment. Alida had no desire to divide with the jug such flattering attention; she had caught a whiff of his breath, and adroitly dodging, darted through the door in the direction of the woodpile.

While domestic preparations were making, the men renewed acquaintance with the jug, and talked earnestly though too ambiguously to be generally intelligible. Meanwhile Henry's eyes were following Alida with a boldness that her preoccupation prevented her from noticing.

When supper was ready, Nat Ryan, the host's elder companion, whose attention to the conversation had been undivided, still demonstrated his capacity for doing one thing at a time and doing it well, for he needed not a second invitation to "fall to," but went at the dishes with an eagerness that left no interval for talking, and when at last the inner man was satisfied, he curled upon the rug like a gorged anaconda, and was soon asleep.

The females having retired, MacNeal and Henry resumed conversation in an under tone. Finally the young man remarked: "There may be money in it, but there's lots of danger. I've stood by you in these expeditions, but have about made up my mind not to run

any more such risks, unless you give me the gal. I settled that to-night, when I saw how pretty she's growing."

"Now, Hal, don't be a fool," the elder rejoined: "the job will require grit; that's why I want you in it. Think of what a chance we have of making a haul; don't let it slip because of a chit of a child who don't know her own mind."

"She's getting to be a splendid woman," responded the other; "before long somebody else will find that out, and if she fancies him then the jig's up for me."

"No danger, Hal; nobody comes here, and the old woman has orders that she never goes nowhar. The fruit is safe; be patient until it's ripe."

"I'm not going to wait; I must have her before she flies the track; she don't overmuch like me now."

"Just humor her; she'll like you well enough."

"She must take first and like after;" persisted the young man. "I won't move in this matter unless you use your authority. You can make her confounded glad to take me. Just get on a tare; a reg'lar rip-snorter, and she'll be glad enough to fly to me for protection."

"I'm not sure that's the way to work it; she's plucky, and don't cow; and she won't mind me for love neither; but then I've never been over fatherly. I'll make the old woman work her around, though with such a temper as she has you'll be sorry, but she's young, and we have time to work it cautiously, for if we don't she'll bolt sure; then all creation won't catch up with her. She's yours, if you let me work it my way."

"All right, I won't push over fast, and risk the losing of her, but I'll have her as sure as gun's iron."

"I guess we'll bring it around," MacNeal answered;
"now to business."

So they bargained, little dreaming that the spirit
which they dreaded had been rekindled into a fervid
flame.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE HORNET'S NEST.

THE morning following the trade in fair humanity, Clinton, with hardy recklessness, was well on the back track through MacNeal's territory; what cared he for danger—young, brave, active, and armed.

About a mile from the cabin a rivulet rippled across the path. Its limpid waters tempted his horse; the rider dismounting, was nothing loath to linger. He was considering how to approach the difficult task that he had assigned himself.

"Good morning!" came the unexpected greeting in a voice that before had charmed him. Searching for the owner, he detected Alida's laughing eyes peeping from behind a tree.

"Ha! little hostess, roving as usual?"

"I'm dividing nuts wi' the squirrels," she replied. "See!" and raising her basket she sprang lightly beside him, and proceeded from her store to fill his pockets.

"Hold!" he cried, "you are turning the lion's share over to me."

"You must have eneaf to keep you from getting lonesome," she answered, and continued to load up.

"I've been wishing for chestnuts," Clinton laughed, "but feared to tackle the burrs. See, here is something for you," and he placed into her hand a roll of guitar strings. To watch her face beaming with pleasure was

a reward to Clinton, but as the sunlit landscape is dimmed by the cloud, so her bright expression faded as, extending to him the package, she said: "I moun't take 'em; main war mad 'bout the cross, an' won't let me hev nothin'." And she was detaching the trinket from the ribbon, but Clinton arrested the motion, as he replied:

"I am sorry that this idea has been put into your head, but as your mother objects I will not insist on your taking the strings, but the cross must remain where I placed it as a remembrance of the evening we spent together. It is a sign of our religion, which I hope may some day sink deep into your heart, and stir it with the wish to know more of the God who has made those stars that we talked about, and the flowers that you love."

Alida did not well understand, but his manner reassured her, and she replied, "Then I'll keep hit."

"May the love it inspires guard you," thought Clinton. He then asked, "Is your mother at home?"

"Yes, an' pap an' the men wi' 'im; they kim back last night."

This information recalled the serious nature of his business, and with an injunction to spare a few nuts for the squirrels, Clinton hastened on, leaving the girl standing by the brook, her thoughts running swiftly as its waters and working from darkness into light. Regarding God she knew but little; of His goodness she had never heard; religion was not a topic of conversation with those about her, nor was the Bible among the household books. Though she felt the influence of beautiful creations, she had not learned to connect the Creator with them. To her the cross was simply a memento—could it be more? What association would the giver convey? Thus she groped.

Meanwhile Clinton was within sight of the familiar bars, on the top rail of which the proprietor leaned, while the smoke from his pipe curled lazily upward; his alert ear had caught the clatter of a horse's hoof, and he had sauntered out to reconnoiter. As Clinton approached they keenly eyed each other, one impelled by haunting suspicion, the other by prospective peril.

"Who is it?" MacNeal mused. "Lost his reckoning perhaps? Well! we might for a consideration show him a short cut."

Dark design lurked in the hardened face; Clinton observed it and measuring the depravity of the man, felt that he "bearded the lion in his den."

"Is this Mr. MacNeal?" he inquired.

"He lives here about."

"I know that cabin to be his, having spent a night there."

This information startled MacNeal. "Is he a prowling detective?" he mentally questioned. "Hardly! one of that stripe would not be fool enough to venture in alone; he's some tenderfoot."

"Have you any business with him?" he asked.

"Yes, and will come to the point in a straightforward way, trusting to be met in like spirit. You have a daughter."

MacNeal puffed his pipe vigorously, and from behind a volume of smoke replied: "Yes, and a pert one."

"The night I spent here afforded the opportunity of discovering that she possesses a remarkably fine voice and talent that is worth cultivating."

"She's a talent for mischief," MacNeal growled, "and the less her freedom with strangers is cultivated the better."

Clinton appeared not to notice his surly manner, but argued: "Were I to discover a gold mine upon your

Clinton was confronted by a burly ruffian, who covered him with a pistol. A second man was several paces in the rear of the first, having also a drawn revolver, while further back, from the foliage that fringed the path, was emerging Alida, who had evidently been undergoing unwonted exercise, for her bosom heaved—deranged tresses veiled her neck and shoulders—her face was aglow—her eyes flashing—her lips compressed—her hands clinched, as she advanced. She looked an angry goddess, and fascinated Clinton, even in his peril, for he realized the situation—and knew that all depended on his ability to dispose of the nearer man, while even her feeble assistance should hold in check the confederate.

Without obeying the ruffian's order, he sternly demanded: "What is the object of this?"

"Hold up your hands, I say!" was the prompt order; "no dodging!"

"Shoot!" the rear man exclaimed. "That's the game!"

As Nat did not instantly obey, he again cried out: "Shoot, or stand out of line."

The critical moment had arrived; Alida was within reach of her object. "Ha!" Clinton exclaimed, as if something behind Nat had surprised him. The ruse disconcerted the ruffian's aim, and simultaneously with the discharge of the pistol there was the whiz of a whip, and its loaded handle disabled the wrist of the would-be assassin. Hal witnessed the discomfiture of his ally, and was about discharging his own weapon, when a pair of lithe young arms encircled his own, and as a cord, bound them to his sides. The youth writhed and twisted to be free, but Alida's fingers still were interlaced with the power that excitement lent. Another whirl of the whip in a hand that had practiced with single-stick, and Nat lay in the road, stunned and *bleeding*.

For Hal the tables were turned, and nerved by his own danger, with an angry wrench he broke the girl's hold, throwing her violently to the ground, where she lay bleeding and unconscious.

Clinton's revolver was now in his hand, and the sight of the prostrate girl quickened its use. Without a word the men advanced; firing as they did so. The muscular effort which Hal had undergone unsteadied his aim, and only two of his shots took effect. One cut a button from his opponent's coat, the other entered the fleshy part of the arm, burrowed beneath the skin and passed out. But he was less fortunate; two shots grazed him, a third lodged in the breast. He threw up his hands and fell. Clinton alone was standing; he tossed over the bank the revolver of his late opponent, that it might not tempt a treacherous hand, and then turned to where the girl lay like a drooped white rose, a crimson rivulet which matted her hair contrasting with her pallor. He kneeled beside her and felt for the pulse; it was fluttering. He then sought water to revive her. A faint voice called: "Stranger, I'm dying of thirst. There's a spring up the path; as the luck's your'n, you won't refuse a fellow?"

Clinton, following the directions, soon found an improvised fountain. He filled his hat with the water that flowed from the bark spout, and then returning first to the more urgent sufferer, held the draught to his lips.

"Thank you!" gruffly muttered the wounded man.

"Would you have done as much for me?" Clinton asked.

"Can't say as I would; you was crossin' of my path, and that I don't 'low. I'd have dropped you but for that wildcat of a gal, and now I'm a gon' gosling."

"Perhaps it is not so bad," Clinton said consolingly;

then, again kneeling beside Alida, he placed his coat under her head, and sprinkled the cool water upon her face. As he chafed her hands he thought: "How many less fair are shielded from wickedness, sheltered from want, and this poor child with the bright future that might be hers is supported by the capricious bounty of criminals, reared in a pestilential atmosphere."

The moralizing did not abate his efforts, and presently the crimson current bounded through the brain and diffused a flush upon her cheek; her eyes opened. Sitting up she looked around confusedly. "What's the matter? Wha' am I?" she asked. "I thought I seed you a-ridin' away?" Feeling the wound, it recalled her recollection and she eagerly exclaimed: "Ere you hurt? Wha' ere they?" and she looked anxiously around.

"You are crowding questions," the relieved Clinton said. "The men who intercepted me are lying in their tracks."

"Ere you hurt?" she again asked.

"Not much."

"Oh, yes, you is; there's blood on your sleeve."

"That's nothing; let me play surgeon." Dipping his handkerchief in the water, he removed the matted blood from her hair and the crimson streaks that disfigured her neck; he then bandaged the wound.

"Hit's now my turn," the eager girl said; and proceeding to tear open Clinton's gory sleeve, she bathed and bound the arm, using her apron for the purpose.

"Who would have thought," Clinton remarked, "that again so soon we should meet, and under such circumstances. How came you here?"

"I started to hum from the chestnut tree, an' comin' to the back o' the house I hearn pap a-talkin' to the

men, an' what he war a-sayin' made me stop wha' they couldn't see me; I caught on that they meant to hurt some one, an' I thought mostwise it mout be you, so I lit out, an' got here jist in time."

"It was indeed," Clinton exclaimed; "and a plucky girl you are. No fellow need want a braver, truer comrade in his time of need. Evidently your friend had designs on my life; Lord knows why; I never crossed his path, as he supposed."

Alida, from her pap's remark, had a clew to Henry's motive, but in her innocence gave it scarce thought. "He's nary friend o' mine," she responded; "an' I never liked 'im; now I despises 'im, an' hates all the rest. They thinks me hard tu manage; they'll find me now harder ner ever, an' fer much I'll quit 'em an' go somewhar in the mountain. I don't know what pap means. He's rough, but I had nary idea he would do the likes of this."

This spirit of rebellion amused Clinton, but he replied: "It would never do for you to wander off; your pap and mam have the charge of you."

Alida was not convinced, and this pacific mood seemed inconsistent with the bravery just displayed. "Neither mam nor pap," she said, "does ar'ything to make me love 'em. I don't feel like I war kin after these hyar doin's; they's low down."

"Never mind," Clinton replied. "Do not worry now that it is over; let us look to those who have been hurt."

"Is that the way you does to them what treats you bad?"

"That is what we learn from God's Book. If we meet again (we may, some time), I will give you a Bible."

"Don't never come this way no mo'; they'd be sure ter git even."

though I have no wish to prosecute them on my own account, yet if they bother her the law will find them out; henceforth an eye is on them."

The shrewd old man felt that a keen eye was on himself as well, and coward conscience made him far from comfortable.

Alida, who had nervously watched them, wondered what influence was subduing her pap's imperious temper, when Clinton rejoined her and taking her hand, said: "We part here; do not fear that you will be punished; they dare not harm you, so stay here; do not run away, and I may again meet my brave, true comrade."

On Alida's part the good-by was simply a pressure of the hand. She was afraid to trust to utterance, and only restrained the tears until her new-found friend was well away; while he reflected: "The experience with this interesting girl was worth the danger, though the episode was full of folly, for, fairly warned, I rode into 'the hornet's nest,' "

CHAPTER VI.

WORTH THE WORKING.

IN the twilight of a November evening Mrs. Conrad and her daughter sat by the blaze of a wood fire that cast fantastic shadows on the parlor wall. The needlework of the one and the book of the other had been laid aside, while they enjoyed this interval between the sun's departure and the lighting of the lamps.

"Winter is upon us, mother," the young lady remarked, "and I have not yet decided where to visit, for stay in this dull place I will not; I should die of *ennui*."

"You were in the city last winter," her mother rejoined, "and hardly contemplate returning yet; in the summer you were at the White Sulphur. Could not you enjoy the novelty of home?"

"There is enough of that during the spring and fall. I have been thinking of a visit to Aunt Ellen. Cousin Clinton has bought for Mr. Grason a town house, which suggests spending a part of the winter with aunty. It is queer for a son to be doing such a thing for a father; usually these favors are reversed. But, as you know, Clinton has no end of money, and I suppose his generosity keeps the old gentleman in good humor."

"It would be enjoyable, Edith, for you to visit Ellen, but consider her husband; he is not given to hospitality."

"Oh! that don't matter; I can get in his good graces; a little flattery will do it. I think, mother, the family

rather like to have company; it keeps the Autocrat on his good behavior."

"No doubt his wife has her share of domestic worry; but, my dear, I do not like the way you talk of getting into 'good graces'—it savors of deceit."

"Well, mother, such cross sticks as Mr. Grason deserve no better. It is necessary to humor and even to deceive the insane, and from the way he cuts up he must be daft."

Further conversation was interrupted by the entrance of the maid with a light. "Has Mr. Randolph come?" the mistress questioned. "Ah! there he is." The familiar step was just then heard, and there entered a ruddy-faced young gentleman, who, since his father's death, had been the proprietor of a tobacco factory in the town of Petersburg, Virginia.

"I will own to being late, mother," the newcomer confessed; "I have been busy getting things shaped up, for we may expect a visitor to-morrow, and I want the leisure to entertain him."

"Who is he?" Edith inquired.

"Don't be in a hurry, Miss Inquisitive; guess a few times."

"Brother, stop worrying; don't you see I am dying to know?"

"No, and I hope you will not get into any such moribund condition as would impair your looks, which will need all your primping."

"Randolph, the *ennui* of this place is unbearable anyway, and your teasing is enough to try the temper of a saint."

"But you know you're a long way from being a saint."

"If not a saint perhaps you think me a sinner; and if I am, pray whose worrying ways are answerable?"

Thus they kept up the war of words, and it was not until after the evening meal that Randolph informed them of his having received a telegram from Clinton Grason, stating that he would be down for a day's shooting.

"The very one of whom mother and I were talking," Edith exclaimed; "how stupid of me not to guess; but after all who would have thought of him? You've been at his house, Randolph; what sort of a place is it? Is it anything like the owner?"

"There is one marked resemblance that his abode bears to himself—external simplicity; and it is wonderfully misleading, for fairly across the threshold one seems to have entered a palace furnished with prodigality and of exquisite taste."

"How I should love to see it!" Edith exclaimed.

"Where," Mrs. Conrad inquired, "does he procure faithful servants to be left in charge of such an establishment?"

"Two of these," Randolph responded, "have been identified with the late Mr. Bascomb's household and attached themselves to the new master; Sally is a matron of some fifty years and a trained housekeeper; there is little else that she knows, but she does know this. Her stolid English husband is the gardener; he has no ambition beyond, but he is a model of neatness in his line. With John-Bull-like tenacity these people are wedded to their ways, and think that they have nothing to learn from American neighbors. Whether the master is at home or abroad, the household goes on; after a prolonged absence, he may suddenly return and find it as though the interval had been only hours instead of months. The remaining member of this bachelor domain is Walter, a smart, middle-aged mulatto; he is the immediate attendant on his master."

"That house only wants a mistress to render it perfect," Edith commented.

"That it does not seem likely to have," her brother rejoined. "Everything runs with smoothness; there is nothing to be suggested, added to, or taken from, and Clinton is disposed to let well enough alone, for he shuns the company of marriageable ladies. I have suspected that he dreads lest some girl may have an eye to his pocket, but he is smart enough not to be entrapped."

"That for his smartness!" Edith exclaimed, as she flipped her thumb and finger. "He is just the fortune-spoiled material that the very first good-looking face will impress, whose owner sets herself to catch him, and some day he will make an outlandish *faux-pas*." Lighting the candle preparatory to retiring, she added: "I've a mind to try my wits on him from sympathy, to save the youth from *mésalliance*."

"Indeed you must not!" her mother interrupted; "do not attempt any such prank, it might shorten his visit."

"Mother, do give me credit for *finesse*; think you I would play openly and scare him? No, I'd secure the trumps of hearts and diamonds ere I showed my hand. Serious little mother really thinks that I am in earnest;" and laughing, she left the room.

Another day dawned through a murky sky; smoke sluggishly curled from the factory chimney and as though loath to leave the haunts of men, settled, pall-like, over the houses; with advancing noon the sunbeams penetrated, and the veil lifted and floated into the ether. The genial rays brightened Edith's anticipations of the coming guest, who arrived on time, and was welcomed with the hospitality universal in the Virginia of that day, when competent, docile help, left "the hand of little employment" with "a daintier sense," and time for culture and for social refinements.

When the family gathered in the parlor after tea Randolph remarked: "Clinton, now that you have returned to America, I've mapped out a career for you."

"What may it be?"

"Will you promise to follow it?"

"I'm not prepared to go it entirely blind, even for you. What is it?"

"Turn politician, aspire to the legislature, then to the governorship, next step into congress. I will stop there, for having climbed to that niche of fame, the way to the pinnacle will suggest itself; for one fairly launched in a political career stops not short of where he must."

"Hold!" Clinton exclaimed. "Worldly experience is wanting for the least of the offices you have mentioned, nor have I the essential knowledge of mankind."

"What is the distinction between knowledge of the world and that of mankind?" Edith questioned.

"In worldly knowledge, especially that of political economy, one must be equipped for the management of public affairs, and can only be so by special study. He whose thoughts have been diverted into other channels, is no more capacitated for law-making or for public affairs than a cobbler would be to build a house, or a carpenter would be to treat a case of fever. It is the ignorant aspirant to office who makes a burlesque of legislation."

"You are overscrupulous," Randolph argued. "If your constituents be satisfied, accept office, and conscientiously do your duty."

"Yes," Clinton rejoined, "and so sure as we ignore trick and expediency, and act conscientiously, we will displease the aforesaid constituents and be politically dead."

"I contend," Randolph persisted, "that you are exactly fitted to occupy public position; your literary edu-

cation, with freedom from private cares, eminently suit you for public office. But what do you mean by knowledge of mankind?"

"He who has his way in politics must be expert in reading and in guiding minds, that he may bend them to his will, to be sure when he sets his political pegs that he will find them where he left them. No, my dear fellow, look for something else."

"Let me solve the problem for you," Mrs. Conrad, who had been plying the crochet needle, suggested; "allow me, with the confidence which experience has given, to arrange the important question."

"It would be but a poor acknowledgment of your interest did I not endeavor to follow such guidance," Clinton replied.

"Then look for some sensible, affectionate girl for wife. The love for her will inspire noble aims. Remember the declaration from the fountain head of wisdom: 'It is not good that man should be alone!' The fullest measure of happiness is derived from the companionship of that one dearer than all others; the visitations of sorrow will fall less heavily when she is by to sympathize, and pleasures are more than doubled with her to share them."

"Ah, Mrs. Conrad!" Clinton rejoined, "though none may gainsay your authority, I have not as yet summoned the hardihood to try, for, after all, is it not somewhat of a lottery? Few of us possess that intuition which gives confidence in the important step."

"Ah! you know nothing of the passion, for it defies doubt and sophistry. Pluck up courage; trust to a woman's intuition that you will not fail."

"Don't you do it, Mr. Grason," Edith exclaimed. "Mother would lead you into all sorts of entanglements. Because her own life has been a cloudless summer day,

every one else must necessarily enjoy a like experience. Take care how you exchange your independent lot for the *lottery* of matrimony."

"Oh, Edith!" her mother interrupted, "you may be excused for inexperience; do not add uncharitableness."

This admonition was lost on the daughter, who resumed: "I would have ambition, I would fit out expeditions, become explorer, be world renowned, and leave a name——"

"And die in a ditch!" Randolph added; "where is the wisdom for Fame's empty bubble, to lead a life of discomfort and danger."

"Indeed!" Clinton interrupted, "you are solicitous about a very no-account person. Some of these times I may be caught up by that 'tide in the affairs of men,' and if I take it 'at the flood, it may lead to fortune.'"

"Ah, my dear fellow," Randolph laughed, "you struck that flood tide when you rolled in on the surf, bearing in your arms the limp form of young Bascomb."

"My slight service, which was no more than any impulsive youth would have attempted, has been liberally rewarded," Clinton replied; who then diverted conversation from himself by narrating in 'dents of travel.

Though it was late when he retired, he felt no disposition to sleep. His mind reverted to late events, and he thought: "These folks, like others, consider that I am an idler, with no higher aim than to enjoy a liberal revenue. They know nothing of my projects or responsibilities. Even this very last. Those earnest, tearful eyes—how they plead! I will know no peace until I shall have rescued that girl from her surroundings, and placed her—*where?*" "What will he do with it?" kept ringing in his now drowsy ear. The subject was too intricate for a tired brain, and he fell asleep, to dream of toiling through mountain ravines

and climbing rocky fastnesses in the search of a voice that echoed from the cliff.

Edith, having retired to her chamber and dismissed the nodding African who had been waiting to disrobe her, seated herself before the grate, and built in the ruddy coals a castle that just then she would not have had the world see, until block on block she had quietly reared it, and it was worth the working for.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WAY OPENS.

"MOTHER, what do you think of Cousin Clinton?" Edith inquired a few days after the guest's arrival, as the two ladies again sat in the parlor.

"Why do you call him 'cousin?' "

"It paves the way to being on easy terms; I want to cozen him, you know. Can I do it? What do you think of him? You always could look right through one."

"Why so interested in Mr. Grason?"

"Mother, you are like a Yankee; you ask questions instead of answering. He's young, good-looking, rich; these might be reasons enough, but they are on the surface. I want to know what you think of his real character?"

"It is not probable, my dear, that any one has gotten at it; his reserve forms a barrier that I imagine few pass."

"I hate secretive people!" Edith exclaimed.

"I do not consider him secretive; he is, rather, forgetful of self. Here they come, ring for supper. Hunters must be hungry."

Edith had a smile for the gentlemen as she passed them in the hall, and was profuse in compliments on observing their abundant game.

"There's no credit due me," Randolph acknowledged. "Yesterday I thought it Clinton's luck; now I've learned that he is the best snap shot I ever saw."

"I claim no superiority; I've simply had leisure for practice," Clinton protested.

"No," said Randolph, "shooting comes natural; it was born in you."

"Well, gentlemen, be ready for supper; time, tide, and mother's teas wait for no man!" Edith laughed.

Later on, renewing the subject of Clinton's skill, she asked: "Cousin, how did you become such a perfect shot? Was it acquired in England? You know you are half a foreigner."

"I am a thorough American," Clinton responded. "What skill I have was gained at home; the gun was my companion in boyhood. Abroad we followed the hounds."

"How do our girls when abroad compare with the English?"

"I may not be a competent judge, but it seems to me that the home training of English daughters gives them charming manners. There is a modesty and docility to parental control that contrasts favorably with the freedom a certain class of American girls assume, who confound the liberal nature of home institutions with personal license."

"You are severe on your countrywomen," Edith remonstrated; "your foreign fancies are fastidious."

"I fear," Randolph surmised, "that Clinton is not likely to find in our home market the 'sensible, gentle and affectionate girl' that mother suggested."

"It is the class of conspicuous tourists that I allude to," the guest explained; "those from the middle ranks of American society, who have amassed wealth, and bustle over Europe, devoid of refinement; for money does not buy it, and pertness tides them along, oblivious of ridicule."

"Well!" Edith exclaimed, "I would not have ac-

cused you of so severe a tirade; your explanation aggravates the matter. Was it not Commodore Decatur who said: 'For my country, right; but for my country, right or wrong?' At least national pride might have suggested your holding a high standard for your countrywomen, no matter what they did. I suppose you fancy some simpering miss, without an idea that could stretch further than her mamma's apron string?"

"To overestimate such as I have described," Clinton affirmed, "would prove me incapable of appreciating the true American girl, who, in loveliness and grace, gentleness and moral worth, is equal to her English sister. But our girls of this type are not usually found abroad; they are at home busy with their studies, and when with a foundation laid they go to Europe, they do us no discredit."

"Perhaps your style," Edith persisted, "is the

"Maiden with the meek brown eye?"

"I believe that its twin sister, *gentleness*, is woman's potent weapon; with it she wins and sways, purifies and ennobles."

"Ah! that's redeeming. There is hope that a pair of dark eyes may yet bewitch you," Edith laughed.

"Don't believe it," Randolph contended. "I know him; he'll take the first flash as a danger signal and bolt."

"*Et tu, Brute!*" Clinton exclaimed. "You must be judging another by yourself. You live in the very region of pretty girls. They combine the stateliness of the North and the grace of the South, and are the fairest in our land."

"Ah! old fellow," Randolph responded, "I did not know that you had such an eye to the beautiful." Edith

joined in the raillery, and throughout the evening was more than usually attractive; her mother watched her with excusable pride, and her brother, feeling a like admiration, wondered why so capable a sister could not be always captivating.

Clinton watched her with a languid grace, as one satiated with feminine fascinations. Edith attributed his inertia to physical fatigue, and she sought to lull him with her music. Her voice was not without sweetness and evinced a high order of culture. Clinton, soothed into semi-reverie, enjoyed it.

"I am putting you to sleep," at last Edith exclaimed.

"On the contrary," replied Clinton, "the music was recalling a pleasant reminiscence. Will you sing for me one or two particular songs? You are privileged to laugh if you consider 'Robin Adair' an old-fashioned selection."

She responded with readiness, and felt as she concluded, "*That* must please him," but his only commendation was the flattering request for just one other, that song of an American poet which has moved alike the cultured and the rude—"Home, Sweet Home."

"It is beautiful!" Clinton remarked when she had concluded, and continuing his reverie he contrasted the voice of the lady and that of the mountain maid; with one it was Art refined, with the other Nature's wild and unadorned outpouring.

When shortly afterward he retired he was more than usually abstracted. The song had recalled the tear-stained face: a sad, reproachful eye burned into his soul, and set his brain to planning. The clock tolled the hours of one and two, while still he puzzled. At last resolved to relieve insomnia by changing the current of thought, he partially dressed and descended to the library for a magazine. On the carpeted stair his

tread was noiseless, so that a peculiar sound arrested his attention, and through the half-open door he saw by the light of a dark lantern a man manipulating the lock of the secretary. Something familiar about the form added interest. Presently the burglar altered his position, and the lantern ray falling on his face revealed the features of MacNeal. An expression of triumph gleamed on Clinton's face, and he clinched his hands as though something coveted was already within their grasp, as he whispered between his set teeth: "*The way opens!*"

The intruder, kneeling at the desk, resumed the lock picking. A noiseless stride—a bound—and Clinton was upon him, pinning him to the floor, and while he was still paralyzed by surprise, whispered: "Make no resistance, or you may arouse the house."

The precaution was incomprehensible to MacNeal, yet he suppressed an oath, and his efforts at release were silently made, though he writhed and twisted to be free. The heavy breathing of both attested the violence of the struggle.

The burglar's first effort was to grasp a silent dirk, but unable to reach it, and realizing that strength was failing, he tried to get at a revolver in his hip pocket, and risk its discharge in his desperate condition, and if it liberated him, trust to his heels to escape. Clinton was alert, however, and grasping his wrist, held it in a constrained attitude, until its fellow could be secured and the two bound together with a handkerchief. The prisoner at last *hors de combat*, was rolled over, and face upward was again startled at recognizing his captor.

"I see you know me?" Clinton observed.

"Yes, and you'd not have done this, but you took me foul,"

"Not so foul as the waylaying of a traveler."

"I had nothing to do with that," MacNeal growled. "If I had wanted to harm you, what was to hinder when we talked at the bars?"

"You were then unarmed, and we were man to man."

"We had only a little talk about the gal," MacNeal reminded him. "You sort of bid for her, and I said she was bespoke, that's all."

"It's not all; I have something more to say about that girl; get up."

It was a curious picture that the lantern light revealed. Opposite each other sat the vanquished and the victor. The one was thickset and coarse, with bloodshot eyes and shaggy beard, which added ferocity to his brutish, sullen face that excess had furrowed.

His *vis-à-vis* was of boyish build, and with clear, searching eyes, and expressive mouth, rigid in sternness. His hand on the table, covering the captured weapons. The elder was flushed, dogged and desperate; the other, pale, cool, calm. With muffled tone he resumed the conversation.

"When I spoke to you about the young girl at your house, you correctly inferred that I wanted her. The assistance she rendered in my encounter on the mountain has determined me to have her."

"You can't have my daughter," was the surly reply.

"She is not your daughter."

"How do you know that?"

"I have but to look on her face and then on yours to tell that. And such being the case, I have as much right to her as you have, and I shall therefore take possession of her."

"You talk mighty confident," MacNeal rejoined. "The bird is still in the bush, and don't you forget it; she'll not sing for you unless you catch her."

"You are not in a position to play the braggart," Clinton admonished; "accept what I propose, or the handcuffs will replace the handkerchief; though I am disposed to deal liberally if you give me no trouble, as you have not actually committed robbery. Surrender the girl without further ado, and I will give you a thousand dollars for her."

"It's a hard thing to be selling of one's own child," the man growled; "and the old woman, she'll not come into it."

"You may as well drop that nonsense about her being your child, or your wife's either; and as to her, she may be ready enough to consent when she knows that the consequences of refusal will be the breaking up of your den and the imprisonment of both of you."

The realization was forced upon MacNeal that the trick was not his, and he consoled himself with the argument that the girl had been troublesome, and was a good riddance in exchange for big money and liberty. He surlily replied: "I give in to your terms, since you take a fancy to the gal. I wish you joy of her! I'd have got shut of her long ago, but for the old woman."

"Listen," Clinton commanded: "Alida must remain ignorant of my connection with her affairs. Tell her that you have only had charge of her, and that a guardian intends her to go to school. Take her to Richmond and buy her an outfit there; I advance the money. Time your journey so that on the 15th of the month, at 12 o'clock, you will have her in the parlor of the — Hotel. She has a gold cross; let her wear it to identify her to my agent, who will, when he shall be assured that you have fulfilled directions, hand you the money agreed upon. From that moment your association with the child is to cease." MacNeal was now liberated, and departed with more meekness than was his wont.

"I'll not trust him," Clinton thought; "he shall be shadowed."

Gathering the implements, he carried them to his room, and adjusting his dress, left the house as a gray glimmer appeared in the east. He was soon in communication with a detective, and having arranged plans, sauntered back to Mrs. Conrad's.

In response to the breakfast bell he joined the family, and surprised them by announcing that business required his going.

"Nonsense!" Randolph exclaimed; "put it off, it can't be so important as our gunning."

"It does not admit of delay."

"Really, that is a new feature," Edith remarked; "we had no idea that you were burdened with business."

"Appearances are sometimes deceptive," the guest rejoined.

That evening at tea the Conrads conjectured as to the cause of Clinton's departure. "You've said or done something, Edith, to frighten him," her brother remarked; "remember, mother warned you."

"I have not," she indignantly responded; "on the contrary, I was particularly guarded. Who could fancy such sensitive people? If we seem indifferent they become miffed, if we are attentive their vanity takes alarm."

"Perhaps he received letters," Mrs. Conrad suggested.

"No," Edith answered, "there was no mail for him, and last night he did not allude to leaving; I do not believe he has any business; he is simply visionary."

"The prominent trait of his character," the mother argued, "is truthfulness. He would not have told you that it was business unless it had been so."

"This abrupt departure is his usual way," Randolph remarked. "I do not ascribe it to the fault of any one; he took quite a fancy to you, mother, and I must say that Edith was on her best behavior, though she did fail to impress him."

"For shame, brother! one would think that I had been trying."

"It would for once have shown excellent taste," was the rejoinder. "Well! I'm sorry he has gone, and the mystery doesn't mend it."

CHAPTER VIII.

FATHER CONFESSOR.

FATHER LITTIG sat in his study, rendered cheerful by the sunshine that beamed through the uncurtained windows. The furniture was of the simplest, and the floor carpetless, but the absence of luxuries was atoned for by literary wealth, for the walls were lined with volumes of secular interest, as well as of theological lore. Behind a desk sat the father, and papers scattered before him were in a confusion that told of frequent handling. The quill rested idly between his fingers, and a smile played over his face. That smile was no stranger to the neighborhood, but inspired in others the love that welled perpetually in his genial heart.

The reverie was interrupted by a servant, who handed a card.

"Invite the gentleman in," said the father, and with a cordial salutation he arose as Mr. Clinton Grason entered.

"I am glad to see you," said the priest. "I should have known you without the card's reminder; yours is a face not soon forgotten."

"Your recollection is flattering, sir; but perhaps I trespass?"

"Not at all; be seated. I observe the rule of being ahead of work, and have ample leisure. When we last met you were about undertaking a journey. I trust the pleasant anticipations were realized?"

"They were; and it is in reference to an event of that trip that I have come to make, as it were, a confession, which I trust may be considered confidential."

"Even your Protestant Bible, Mr. Grason, enjoins that you confess your faults one to another, and in our holy office it is a privilege to welcome all who come, and to offer such consolation as it may be in our power to afford."

"Pardon my candor, father; but I would not deceive you with the hope of a convert. The precept and example of an early benefactor induced me to bestow some thought upon religious subjects. I have waded through dogma and ritual, and I trust at last have gained a glimpse of that religion which, to my faith, is beyond it all."

"I admire your frankness, my dear friend; upon common ground let us meet, mutually believing in Divine love, which commands us that we love one another. How may I serve you?"

"In the heart of our own country, as well as in heathen lands, there is need of the missionary," Clinton answered. "During my recent journey I encountered a fit subject." He then narrated the meeting with Alida.

"'Tis a strange story!" exclaimed the father; "to rescue such as she would be a glorious undertaking!"

"An unlooked for circumstance has opened the way," resumed Clinton, who then told of the encounter with MacNeal, and continued: "My desire is to place the child at our neighboring convent, the same that my sister Leila attends.

"For reasons which you will appreciate, I do not wish to be known in the transaction, and ask you to assume immediate charge; receive her from MacNeal, and enter her at school, thus proving a barrier between her dark

past and a bright future, as well as a medium of support from me. The sisters would inquire no further when told that she was a waif confided to your care, and the girl would not trace me as the author of her changed life."

A smile played over the father's face as he asked: "How old is this *protégée*?"

"I should judge about fourteen."

"Of prepossessing appearance?"

"Not particularly; she is at an awkward age—

" 'Where the brook and river meet.' "

"But when the brook shall have glided into the river! have you thought of that?"

In the young man's unabashed, inquiring look the priest read only of a heart brimming with unselfish sympathy, as Clinton responded: "Behind your clerical robes, father, I had hoped to be sheltered. The girl is more a child mentally than physically. Being at boarding-school, she will receive only a vague impression of a guardian. Should we meet, she will not recognize me as such. When she grows to womanhood, I could only hope to continue my usefulness to her by maintaining this *incognito*. You can aid in the scheme, for such respect hedges you about that none will ask embarrassing questions."

"I will be glad to assist in your noble undertaking," the priest replied.

Clinton then detailed the plan which he had matured for the meeting in Richmond, and concluded: "Do not be shocked at the rusticity of your charge."

"We can make allowances," said Father Littig.

"Some explanation," Clinton suggested, "may be expected by even the unmatured mind of your charge; her intellect, brightened by a self-reliant life, will sug-

gest questions regarding her change of home. Suppose I write a few lines which you might read to her."

"A good idea; but you seem assured that this man will not disappoint you?"

"He will be in the toils of the law at the first treacherous step," Clinton declared.

While he wrote Father Littig observed his keen eye and firm mouth. "Here is character and resolution," he thought, "one who will not be shaken from principle or moved from purpose. Who may estimate the benefit of his good work? As yet, the religious faith of this child is nothing; be it my office to stamp on her heart the seal of the true faith, and guide her footsteps into our holy Church."

Clinton, having concluded the letter, handed it to the priest, at the same time remarking: "You have relieved my mind by your kind co-operation. I am deeply indebted to you."

"Not at all, dear friend, the indebtedness is mine; for you have afforded me the opportunity of assisting in the ransom of an immortal soul. God's holy mother has guided your steps to this rescue of her precious daughter, and has accorded me the privilege of being an humble helper."

CHAPTER IX.

EN ROUTE.

IT was midnight. Alida had long since retired, but her mam, usually wakeful at that hour, knitted as she smoked, while her thoughts drifted dreamily. In the midst of the silence, broken only by the monotonous click of her needles, she heard the rumble of a wagon; and she knew that it could be only the old man's, and she was not surprised at his entrance a few moments later.

His manner was subdued, and he said in a low tone: "Fetch something to eat; be quick about it, and don't wake the gal. She mustn't hear what I've got to tell."

He then drew a chair to the fire, and maintained a moody silence. He well knew that Alida's surrender would arouse the latent passion of his better half, which even he had reason to dread. "I'll tell her," he at last concluded, "that I've struck up with the child's relations; she always was feardest of them."

When the edge of appetite was appeased, he pointed to where Alida was lying, and remarked: "She's got to go, for——"

"Wha' to?" the wife broke in.

"There's no use higgling about it, Ann; she gits."

"Ef she gits, I git too!" responded the irate matron.

"You're a fool! listen to sense; she was nigh giving us away by lettin' of that young chap see the infernal finery that you will keep a paradin', and after all it

ended in the usin' up of our boys; but now a wuss thing has happened; I've stumbled across her kin; the jig's up."

"But, Jeems, I've a say in this; I've had the keer of that child sence she was a baby. She thinks I'm her mam."

"Well, if she thinks so, others don't. Gather your wits, and listen to reason. Her kin is on our track; they has got me jist here" (he pressed the point of his thumb upon the table), "and unless I hand her over the bobbies will raid this roost."

The woman argued and scolded, but to no purpose; the dire alternative faced them, either surrender the charge or be broken up. When at last she was disposed to give in, MacNeal, by way of reconciling her, continued his argument: "I tell you the thing had to come; that kid was already on too high a horse. As to Hal's gettin' her, we can't force her into that after the last scrimmage; and the nearer a woman she gits, the harder it will be for you to keep your secret; she's gro'in' like her people."

"Whar's she got to git?"

"What's the use of asking? You know wha' she com' from. I'm to deliver her to a party, and no questions asked. I must say the man what I had my dealin's with acted on the square. He was no way close-fisted, but he means business; and if I don't come to time, I'll hear from him sure."

The wife concluded to make a virtue of necessity, and in the morning, addressing Alida, she said: "I has ben a talkin' to your pap, an' he agrees that you shall be sent to school, as you'r' so bent on l'arnin', not as I thinks ary good will kim ef hit, but sence that young chap what was hyar put hit into your foolish head, I've ben a worryin' ef your pap tel he 'lowed you mout go; you know how I hates to cross you."

This was unexpected news to Alida, and the next few days were passed in joyous anticipation.

When the time for departure arrived she thought her mam's lachrymose farewell rather demonstrative, as she deemed the parting but temporary. "Never mind!" she said, "hit ain't fer long; the schools all hes a holid-ay, an' I'll be hyar ag'in." The allusion to return excited a fresh outburst, and both were sobbing, when Alida was rudely jerked away and made to take her place in the wagon.

When they had passed familiar haunts, and the rattling conveyance was exchanged for the cars, new scenes opened to view and the young traveler's spirits revived, in spite of her companion's moodiness; but to her questions MacNeal rarely responded. Finally she ceased to put them, and gazed at the shifting landscape, until the early darkness of a fall evening closed upon it. At last, lulled by the monotonous rumble, she dropped into a sleep that lasted until the train pulled into the depot.

The few persons about the platform, impatient to get out of the cold, failed to notice the contrast between the rough-featured man, whose decent apparel could not hide his coarseness, and the graceful girl, with her innocent face, wearing its look of bewilderment.

MacNeal had chosen his hour of arrival as one who loved darkness rather than light. They glided into the shadow of the houses, and along alleys, familiar to the one, a *terra incognita* to the other; and at last stopped before a dingy structure, which MacNeal entered unceremoniously, and ushered his companion into a bare-looking apartment, along which extended a bar. On a common oak bench was stretched the form of a negro, who might have been mistaken for a bundle of rags but for the nasal music that emanated therefrom. A

stove occupied the center of the room, and its long, dusty pipe added to the general unsightliness.

"Wake up, you nigger!" MacNeal exclaimed; and his rough summons producing no response, he shook the dusky figure, and again shouted: "Hustle! pick yourself up, and start the fire."

The negro yawned, rubbed his eyes preparatory to opening them, and his torpid brain beginning to thaw, he exclaimed: "I declar, boss! you back ag'in? I——"

"Shut up!" MacNeal interrupted; "start the fire;" and he stepped behind the bar and helped himself to something to warm the inner man, while the negro emptied a hod of coal into the stove.

"Now, Jack," MacNeal resumed, "tell your mistress I'm here, and have something for her to attend to."

In response to this message, a middle-aged woman, with the keenest of black eyes, entering the room, exclaimed: "Good-morning, Jim, you're back soon; business brisk?" Perceiving Alida, she stopped abruptly, and looked inquiringly.

"Yes," he responded, "we're on business. Our girl has got high notions, and I'm putting her to school; we've been on the road all night and are deucedly hungry; get breakfast; then I want you to take her shopping and rig her out. I don't know nothin' 'bout woman's fixin's, neither does she."

"I'll do it," the woman answered. "Are you in a hurry?"

"Yes, and there's no time for app'intments and disapp'intments with a mantuamaker; everything's got to be readymade, for our app'intment is at twelve."

The gimlet eyes again scrutinized MacNeal's stolid countenance; they were then directed to Alida, and softening into a smile of sympathy, she said: "You must be tired, child, after your journey; come into the

back room and take your things off." She led the way to a cozy-looking apartment.

When refreshed by breakfast Alida started with her shopping companion. The hurrying crowd and decorated windows bewildered her, and she was so taken up with sights and sounds that the questions with which her new companion plied her were most unsatisfactorily answered.

"You're a chip of the old block!" the woman exclaimed. "You don't give yourself away no more than Jim MacNeal. Were you ever before in a big city?"

"No," and Alida turned to scrutinize a beggarly-looking fellow, who with a sack upon his back shambled along, crying in muffled monotones: "Ol' rags! ol' rags!"

"Where's your pap going to put you to school?" was the next question, but it was lost on Alida, for just then a boy with a bundle of newspapers, shouted: "*Whig* and *Inquirer*; full account of the hanging!"

"What?" gasped the girl.

"Nothing, child; only some poor devil who got into a row with his wife and killed her. Come on! if we stop to look at everything we'll not get through," and she drew her charge into a shoe establishment.

"Let's see some gaiters of a size to fit this young lady," she said, addressing a youth who, with chair tilted and feet in the air, was absorbed in a pictorial. The feet came down and the boy responded: "I'll call the boss," and observing the fair customer, he seemed, Hamlet like, "to find his way without his eyes."

Shopping having fairly commenced, the accumulation necessitated the purchase of a valise. At last the conductress said: "I believe we have about all you'll want, unless it is something in the jewelry line; all girls love ornaments."

"I has this, an' hit's all I keers fer," Alida responded, and she drew forth the cross.

"Where did you come by that? I didn't know Mac tuck much stock in them things."

"A friend guv hit ter me."

"It's a wonder your pap hasn't tuck it from you; he ain't got no use for crosses."

The girl did not respond, but in spirit of bravado allowed the trinket to remain in view. The accompanying flash of her eye was observed by the woman who, as they returned, having still vainly questioned, silently commented: "She's a strange child; no wonder Mac wants to get her out of the way."

Having returned to the house, they found the old man's patience about exhausted. "When women shop," he exclaimed, "they never know when to stop, and generally don't till the money's gone. You've been away long enough to buy out all the swell stores."

"Not quite, Jim; draw it mild."

"Come, gal, hustle," he cried, "time's up;" and seizing the valise he started out regardless of Alida's delay to say "Good-by!"

Their route lay through the State House Square, and as they crossed it the wondering Alida stoppd before the equestrian statue of Washington. "Come, child!" MacNeal urged, "you haven't got no time to stare, though I am not astonished, for the fellow what saddled that horse didn't know his business. He put the girth around the middle of the belly; the horse might kick up, and then the giner'l would git down and cuss. Come, I've something to tell you; it wouldn't do while you were with that weasel of a woman." Alida listened with wide-eyed wonder as he continued: "You's been thinking that me and the old woman is your pap and mam; we ain't no kin, and has only had charge of

you sence you was a baby. I met the other day him as is your gardeen; he inquired about you and ordered you fetched to school."

"Is I goin' to see him?"

"He is to send for you, so come along."

They were soon at the hotel which the child naturally mistook for a seminary; entering the parlor, the young traveler was in wonderland, and she did not observe the only occupant of the room, a clerical gentleman who, seated near the window, was not too absorbed in his paper to notice her arrival. A moment later another party sauntered in, whose dress was travel worn.

"Is this big thing on legs what they calls a piano?" Alida inquired.

"Yes," MacNeal responded, amused either by her question, or pleasurably anticipating the one thousand C. O. D.

Alida crossed over and inspected the instrument. The clerical gentleman was again watching her; presently he drew near: "Are you fond of music?" he asked.

"I loves to sing, sir, an' plays on the banjo."

"Where are you going?"

"I's come hyar, sir, to go to school."

"Who is to send you to school?"

"My gardeen, sir."

"Who is he?"

"I dunno, I never seed him."

"I have come," the questioner responded, "to meet a girl named Alida."

"That's my name!" the child exclaimed, smiling brightly.

The priest then turning to MacNeal said: "A word with you," and led the way into an anteroom. Their conversation must have been satisfactory, for they soon returned, and MacNeal, extending his hand to Alida,

said: "Good-by! this man will look after you. I reckon you'll git onto so much l'arnin' that you'll never think of mam nor me no more. Good-by!"

The traveler who had been standing at the window seemed to have gotten tired of waiting, and also departed.

Though Alida had little reason for attachment to her pap, at the departure of this last tie to her old home a desolate feeling came over her. Father Littig, whom the reader has doubtless recognized, interpreted the pensive face. Gently taking her hand he said: "The old friend has gone, let me take his place. When did you come?"

"Early this morning. Ere you my gardeen?"

"No, but I am here in his stead."

"I should like to see him," Alida exclaimed.

"As he cannot be here," the priest answered, "he has written you," and he produced the letter.

"Is it to me?" she eagerly asked.

"Yes, to you."

"I'm so glad! hit's the fust letter ever sont right to me." The wriggling of her fingers attested her delight, but soon, curiosity getting the better of agitation, she settled down to listen, as her companion read:

"DEAR ALIDA: A great change is about to take place in your mode of life. The time has arrived for you to leave your old home and with it your wild ways. You must acquire the book learning and the cultivated manners, together with the musical art, which are to fit you to become a lady.

"It may surprise you to learn that the MacNeals are not your parents; you will never return to them, and will drop their name for one to which you have a better claim—Alida Lucett.

"As soon as you are able write and tell me of your

thoughts, your doings, and your wants, for your happiness is of deep interest to

“Your affectionate

“GUARDIAN.”

“I think I shall like him!” Alida exclaimed. “How I wish I could see Mr. Clinton, an’ tell him about my goin’ to school.”

“Who is he?” the priest inquired.

His genial manner had gained upon her confidence, and she gave an account of her first meeting with Clinton, but for reasons undefined she did not refer to his second coming.

That afternoon the journey was resumed with her new and congenial escort.

CHAPTER X.

WORTH THE WINNING.

"I'M delighted, Edith, that you have taken compassion on me," Mrs. Grason remarked, as she welcomed her niece to the big town house. "Your coming relieves my loneliness, for Leila is at school, Clinton abroad, and Mr. Grason in his office most all the time."

"I had supposed," the guest rejoined, "that Leila would have been enjoying the city with you, and I expected to find Cousin Clinton making this new house somewhat of a headquarters."

"He gives us much of his time when in Maryland, but he left last November, and just like him, without an intimation of departure. His large business interests may have demanded supervision."

"I do not understand," Edith responded, "why he, with a princely fortune, should worry about business; this love of gaining might be natural to one ground down by poverty, but his paths are gilded."

"Clinton is reticent," her aunt explained; "we know but little of his affairs. I am sure, however, that his devotion to business is not due to love of accumulation; but, however independent he may be, it is not like him to idly drift on the current of prosperity."

Such occasional scraps of information as Edith gleaned rekindled her interest and excited belief that the cousin was "*worth the winning*."

Toward spring a genial sunshine tempted Mrs. Gra-

son to propose a drive to the country place, and she suggested that on the way they surprise Leila with a visit.

As the carriage wheels grated on the gravelled road that wound through the convent grounds, the trimmed grass, the grouped trees and the clustered shrubbery, which in the gentle breeze nodded to the sunshine, inspired a feeling of joyous purity, in a place where brooded the spirit of Peace.

"How restful!" Edith exclaimed; and the ladies alighting, were ushered into the parlor, where Leila was soon in her mother's arms, exclaiming:

"Oh, mamma! it was so good of you to come. I had an awful fit of spring fever. Ah, me! Cousin Edith, I wish I, like you, had finished schooling."

"These are your happiest days, child."

"Oh, yes, I know that's how grown people talk; they forget childhood troubles. But my schooldays are pleasant, and such friendships as we girls form! but on days like this spring fever is an epidemic. Well! holidays will soon be here, and, Cousin Edith, you must stay with us until then."

"No, my dear, that would wear out my welcome; but I'll remember your invitation for some later occasion."

Mrs. Grason arose to leave as the clangor of the bell announced the close of the morning session, and while they stood at the door the girls were already romping over the grounds.

"Leila, my dear," her mother inquired, "who is that graceful girl? See! she runs like a deer."

"She is the wildest piece in the school," Leila answered. "We might fancy her an Indian if only her hair was black."

"She is erect as one," Edith remarked.

"There is a mystery about her," Leila resumed. "Father Littig brought her last fall. She seemed to

have just come out of the backwoods, but she is improving wonderfully."

"As you've a girl with a mystery, perhaps you've a 'school for scandal,' " Edith insinuated.

"No, we are warned against discreditable remarks; besides, Alida—for that is her name—would not stand them. The strangest of all is her talent for music and her wonderful voice."

"Yes," remarked Sister Filomina, who had joined them, "her music is more than art, it is genius and soars above culture."

"How I should enjoy hearing her sing!" Mrs. Grason exclaimed.

"I doubt if she will do so," the sister responded; "she is a singular, sensitive child, and herself a delicate instrument, requiring nicest touch."

"She's fond of me," Leila suggested; "I may persuade her." And off she darted, but they saw the girl shake her head and bound away with a ringing whoop, as if to illustrate her powers.

"She may be more amiably disposed when you next come," Sister Filomina said; and the visitors with a "Good-by" drove out again into the busy world.

"How far is it to the Glen?" Edith asked as they were about leaving Shandy Hall.

"Some five miles; why do you ask?"

"I've a desire to see what kind of a curious place so odd a person as Cousin Clinton can have for an abode."

"We will drive there," her aunt responded; and within the hour they were at the gate.

"How beautiful!" Edith declared as the carriage entered the grounds, which still retained the wildness that had charmed Clinton when a boy.

As they neared the mansion, the alert ear of the

housekeeper warned her and she was at the door to meet them.

"Good-morning, Sally!" Mrs. Grason greeted; "Miss Conrad and I have come over to look at the Glen."

"It's welcome ye are, mum, an' the misther would be proud o' the 'oner," the matron responded, as she conducted them across the hall. "It's quite refreshing loik to spake to ony o' 'is kin. Now ye wadna moind a glass o' sherry while yees waiting for lunch?" and having ushered them into the parlor off she shuffled. The room was of Moorish architecture; the walls of ebony, inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Elaborately carved pillars supported the wide arches, from the centers of which were suspended dark gold chandeliers as clustered Moorish lanterns. Edith was awed into silence. With noiseless footfall on the velvet rug she moved across the room, and sinking among a mass of cushions was lost in wonderment.

In a few moments Walter appeared, bearing cake and wine. Though rare was the amber fluid, a whole decanter would not have turned Edith's head as had the magnificence around her. "Was there ever such a gorgeous room!" she at last exclaimed. "It is made up of mirrors and marble and gold."

"You should see his art treasures," her aunt replied, as she led the way to a communicating gallery of paintings. From the enjoyment of this esthetic feast they were summoned to the dining-room, where, with the more substantial repast, a new surprise awaited the younger visitor. The walls were of paneled mahogany, the ceiling of the same rich wood, relieved by a gorgeous chandelier of silver and glistening pendants. On one side of the room a richly carved mantel adorned a fireplace of hospitable proportions, and opposite, a buffet glistened with silver and cut glass. The table

and chairs, ornately carved, were of mahogany, to match the door and window trimmings, and were upholstered of Beauvais tapestry.

"Sally," said Mrs. Grason, after they had done credit to her hospitality, "I want Miss Edith to see the library."

"Sure, mum, an' it's glad I am to show it," and she led the way. The fire was burning in the grate, the slippers lay beside the hearth, and on the desk were papers of late date.

"Will Mr. Grason return to-day?" asked Edith.

"La, miss! 's may coom 'ome ony moment."

"And catch us here!"

"In an 'our 'e might coom, and 'e mightn't be 'ere for months; we niver knows; but the 'ouse is always ready for 'im; 'e loiks to step in just as 'e stepped out."

"It is homelike at all events," Edith remarked. "It prevents the dreary feeling which one would experience in coming into a chill house which has been closed during a long absence."

Her eye now wandered over the volumes in the well-filled cases, for as Cicero has compared a room without books to a body without a soul, so she was eager to learn what sort of intellectuality this man possessed, with such ample literary surroundings. The variety was puzzling, and only by a laborious search could she have followed in the track that there lay hidden. At last, half-reclining in a cushioned chair, she indulged in reverie, and fancied that a stranger was leaning over her, while he pointed to a portrait, and whispered, "Edith, see the mistress of the Glen!" In front of the painting there hung a mist, and as she watched and wondered it floated off, revealing outlines that gradually became distinct, until her own fair face stood out upon

the canvas. Still the words were ringing in her ears: "Edith, see the mistress of the Glen"—when—"Edith's seen the mysteries of the Glen," was laughingly exclaimed by her aunt, who added: "Come! let's go."

How cruel was the awakening! Yet the realistic vision became a waking thought that the splendors she had seen were *worth the winning*.

CHAPTER XI.

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS.

"How mail accumulates during even a brief absence!" thought Clinton, as, having rung for breakfast, he examined the letters that lay upon the mantel in his London quarters.

"Ah! here is something from Maryland," he said, and breaking open the letter, he alternated the morning meal with bits of home news, as follows:

"THE RECTORY.

"DEAR MR. GRASON: It affords me pleasure to inclose a letter from your ward. It has not undergone the supervision of the sisters, therefore allow for literary shortcomings, of which our sensitive scholar has misgivings; for her imagination pictures you as scrupulously particular. But for the restraint which this impression exercises, her wild nature might have come into collision with school discipline.

"You will be pleased to learn that her musical ability amounts to rare genius. From this circumstance her teachers are disposed to indulge her eccentricities, which are toning down, and we watch hopefully her development.

"With thanks for your confidence, and for the opportunity afforded of humbly aiding in this good work, I am,

Faithfully yours,

"JOSEPH LITTIG."

"I am fortunate in securing so judicious a confidant!" Clinton thought, as opening Alida's letter, he read:

"THE CONVENT.

"DEAR GUARDEEN: I got your nice letter. I managed to read hit, and mighty glad, for I don't sort of like to sho hit to nobody. You was so kind that I felt that I must do as you sed, and let you no how I es gitin on I likes the sisters an the school but am so fur behind the yother girls that they laffs at me but the sisters is kind an favors me I am gitin on in music, the notes is no trouble an the sisters is better pleased with that than they is with the lessons. You say I must tel you my wants, wel I don't want for nothin but your picture please send me that as I would like to se what kind of a lokin ol gentleman you is. No more now I don't no how to finish, so I wil just say your ALIDA."

"So she wants the old gentleman's picture!" Clinton laughed. "She must wait until he gathers the wrinkles. 'Your Alida!' Yes, you may well put it that way; by right of purchase and interest you are mine." The thought was interrupted by the entrance of a young gentleman, who exclaimed: "Grason, old fellow! Good-morning! I learned last night of your return, and here I am to claim you ere another flight; it may be to the Antarctic Continent."

"I'm glad to see you, Merryfield!" Clinton responded; "but your own peregrinations are no less than mine, with the difference that yours are for frolic, as your very name implies, mine are on business."

"Nonsense! Grason; business to you is superfluous; be like Sardapalus, a king of feasts and flowers!"

"Ah! remember his fate. We must render a faithful stewardship. But I'm not always at work; am in London now to enjoy the season. I have no notion of driving business; let those that do so gather the Dead Sea fruit."

"Where were you taught to moralize?" his visitor inquired.

"My early years were passed among rural scenes; I learned to gather the wild flowers, chase the butterfly, and I never have quite forgotten how."

"You have touched the keynote of philosophy," remarked Merryfield.

"It was whispered among the shadows of a lovely glen," responded Clinton, "where I loitered when a boy, though I lived sufficiently near a great metropolis to watch humanity's mad stream, chasing its gilded god. Then, in my rural retreat, I drew conclusions, which a mature judgment strengthened."

"Perhaps, Sir Moralist, my coming has disturbed you! What have you on hand for to-day?"

"Nothing; I am at your service."

"Then come look at some horses; your judgment may help me. I have fancied a pair, and the jockey declares them to be without spot or blemish; but I put off closing the bargain hoping to obtain your opinion."

"You are welcome to my judgment," Clinton responded, "though doubtless you are as capable of deciding as myself."

"I do not think so; for since the affair at Kilray's hunt, I've entertained high respect for your horse lore."

"You mean my taming the fractious Sorrel?"

"Yes, and it was a put-up job."

"I never suspected that," Clinton replied.

"Well! thinking no evil yourself you are not on the lookout for it in others. Come! we will dine at the club, and afterward go to Lady North's reception."

There were so many horses to be tried that it was late when they sauntered in at the Hampton Club.

"Who is that trim-looking fellow with Merryfield?" a young man standing with a group of gentlemen inquired.

"Clinton Grason," one of the party replied. "He is

constantly on the wing, and rarely favors us with his company."

"You need not want it," a snobbish-looking chap rejoined; "he is a plebeian American, with an English fortune that makes him conceited."

"You are at fault," an elderly gentleman corrected, who had been hidden behind his newspapers; "I happen to know Grason, and a cleverer gentleman never lived."

"I crave your pardon, Lord Kilray," the traducer exclaimed. "I did not know that his friend was listening."

"No great matter," the old lord observed. "I was sitting in this corner before you came, and am not responsible for your talking so loudly that I could not but hear. I am gratified at the opportunity of setting you right. At a certain fox hunt you tried to ride down his physical capacities; do not undertake to belittle his moral worth, for you will as equally fail."

The young gentleman addressed endeavored to conceal his chagrin behind a scornful smile, and as his party moved off, he muttered: "My lord is crusty; the gout has given him extra twinges."

Clinton, observing his defender, advanced to greet him. A group soon gathered about them, for Lord Kilray, far from being crusty, was a general favorite, because of the sunshine in his nature.

"Come! Grason," Merryfield called, interrupting a discussion; "come! time's up; let us leave this den of miscellaneous gentlemen—some who don't want wives—those who can't get them—and the balance, who having gotten them, would gladly be rid of them. We are not in the fix to feel the need of either refuge or consolation; let's be off to the fair claimants in Grosvenor Square."

"You've grown facetious!" Kilray exclaimed. "You

at least belong to the class of those who are *trying* to get them; you will be in the proper track, among the bright bevy at Lady North's. Good luck to you! and may you never look back with longings to the tranquillity of the club."

"Welcome to London! Mr. Grason," exclaimed Lady North, as Clinton crossed the drawing room to pay his respects to the hostess.

"Thanks, your ladyship; your invitation through Mr. Merryfield does me honor."

"Not at all! I am glad to see you; it is a weakness of our sex to have mandates promptly obeyed, especially by one who came off so handsomely in the affair at Lord Kilray's. May you ride through all your difficulties as well!

"As you are comparatively a stranger, allow me to introduce you to some one; let me see! who shall we select first?" She scanned the assembly. "There is Miss Stanhope, the belle of last season, who will acquaint you with what's going on. If you wish to be posted, she's your choice. Ah! I see you hesitate; you do not incline to gossip. There is Anna Physic, the lady with the gold-rimmed glasses, with an intellectual face and positive jaw; though slightly odd, she is a brilliant conversationalist. Still not your fancy? Well, perhaps her erudition would startle you. Let us look for another style. There is Kate Lawton behind the curtain, charmingly bashful. Who shall it be?"

"How can I select from such a galaxy? I must beg your grace to make the choice."

"I have heard, Mr. Grason, of your indifference to our sex; disprove the slander by deciding."

"Then let it be Miss Lawton, who, in her own inexperience, will view with charity my shortcomings; for to the lady of fashion I should appear a clown; to her of learning little else than a bore."

"Such meekness is amusing, Mr. Grason, in one of your coolness and judgment. Kate, my dear, Miss Lawton, allow me to introduce to you my friend, Mr. Grason."

"There should be a sympathy between us, Miss Lawton," Clinton began; "we both are strangers to this company."

As his rich voice fell upon her ear the girl's coyness vanished; her large blue eyes met his ingenuous gaze, for she realized in him a freedom from conventional cant.

"It is my first appearance," she replied. "I retired behind this curtain to be a quiet looker-on."

"Is it not better," Clinton rejoined, "to boldly plunge in? Then the chill will be over."

"Perhaps so, especially when one has company. But surely *you* have not just turned out?" and she looked archly at him.

"Oh, no, I have seen something of the world, but my experience with London society is limited. Americans rarely spend their earlier days merely in social enjoyment, but look forward to a well-earned pleasure later on."

"I am glad to have met you," she said, "for I am interested about your country; we expect to spend next winter in Canada, and will extend our tour to the United States."

He kept her attention keenly alive, until the ubiquitous hostess appeared, conducting a well-known *habitué* of society, who was attracted by the fresh beauty of Miss Lawton.

When Clinton departed from the festive scene a silvery light bathed the slumbering city, quiet for a brief interval between night and morning. While he enjoyed the rest from revel a female glided toward

him: "My love!" she said, and advancing, she revealed a pretty face though spoiled by paint.

"Your love!" Clinton replied. "It is a sacred title, perhaps, that only you have a right to claim, which the pitying angel sheds on you from yonder heaven!" he pointed upward. It brought her face to face with God; his look burning into her bosom melted the hardness there, the fountains of her heart were opened, and burying her face in her handkerchief she wept.

Clinton placed some gold in her hand, as he added: "May it keep you from erring, while you listen to the warning of your heart, which even now is eloquently appealing."

When she looked up he was gone; only the echo of his words fell on her stricken soul.

Twenty-four hours after Clinton had dropped his correspondence he took it up again; and in the modest answer to the priest and kindly letter to the friendless schoolgirl, one would scarcely recognize the child of fortune, who, all unscathed, had passed through the lights and shadows.

CHAPTER XII.

HOLIDAY HOPES.

THE trees in the convent garden were bowing before the dismantling blast; with every gust the red and yellow leaves fluttered down to shelter the sod, ere commingling with the earth, to resume the circuit through the vegetable world.

It was Wednesday, the usual holiday, and the girls were grouped about the play room. The entrance of the sister with the mail caused a flutter, attended with the usual exclamations of joy or disappointment, as the self-constituted postmistress favored or passed them by.

"A letter for Miss Grason," she said; and Leila, glancing at the stamp, bounded to a quiet corner, not observing that it was preoccupied by a girl, busied with embroidery. In a little while the assembling of a noisy group caused her to look up; and she observed in her unobtrusive neighbor the object of their gathering.

"Come, Alida!" exclaimed one, "sing for us 'The Rainy Day.'"

"Oh, yes, do," was the boisterous chorus.

"I'm busy," Alida replied.

"Come!" they still persisted; "'The Rainy Day' is just the song."

"I can't," she reiterated. "There's rain enough without a flood of tears, they would be sure to follow."

"Nonsense! don't grow sentimental; come, sing."

"I'm not in the humor;" and Alida resumed the work as if to be rid of them.

"We might have known this!" exclaimed another of the party; "though I say that a bird that can sing ought to be made to sing, and we would go about it if only Sister Anastasia was not in the room; she'd be sure to take up for the unaccommodating piece." With this wrathful explosion they departed, and quiet was restored.

Leila, having finished reading her letter, fell to perusing the features of her neighbor, whose wrathful countenance subsided into pensiveness.

"Why will not you sing, Alida?" she inquired; "are you disappointed that there was no letter for you?"

"My letters are addressed to the care of Father Littig; my guardian is the only correspondent."

"Where is he?"

"I never know; abroad somewhere."

"Then how do you direct your answers?"

"They go through the same channel."

"There is some satisfaction in being free of convent inspection."

"It amounts to little. I've few secrets," she sighed.

"Is your home far away that you cannot return at vacation?"

"Very far."

"How lonely you must have felt without the girls."

"No, I was at work with my lessons. You know how behindhand I was in my studies."

"Yes, but you are doing splendidly now."

"Though left here during vacation, it is by no neglect of my guardian. He is kind, and sends me everything you could think of; he does not seem to know that many of the articles would not be allowed here, and except that they are received through the priest I might never see them. They are in his keeping; the sisters would think that my guardian tempted me to vanity."

"Fine fixings that one cannot wear," Leila rejoined, "are poor consolation for being shut up in a convent. I've a capital idea; come spend Christmas with me at Shandy Hall; it is the dearest sort of an old country place."

At this prospect Alida's eyes sparkled with delight, but a mist soon bedimmed them.

"What is the matter, you queer girl?"

"That's just it, I am a 'queer girl;' so queer that you would be ashamed of me."

"Not now," her companion rejoined; "that was when you came. From a wildcat you have turned to a mild-eyed doe."

"You've drawn it most too *mild*," laughed Alida. "Convent discipline has by no means tamed me."

"Let your friends judge," Leila replied; and added: "There is another inducement; in this letter brother writes that he will return to spend the holiday; he is the nicest fellow you ever saw. You'll feel at home with him directly."

It would have been strange if her rapturous pictures of Christmas had not awakened longings in Alida's breast. She exclaimed: "It is so kind of you, Leila; it would delight me to go, and I should try to behave, but I don't see how I can arrange. Mother Superior would not consent; last summer I was prohibited from going outside the gate; perhaps she feared that the wild-cat might take to the woods."

"Write to headquarters," Leila suggested. "Even if your guardian is abroad, you may be in time. Never mind Father Littig, or Mother Superior. Write to your guardian; if he is reasonable he will consent."

Alida, obeying the impulse, was proceeding to the study-room to carry out the suggestion, when informed that the priest desired to see her.

When she entered the parlor he extended to her a letter, as he said: "Do not stand on ceremony, but read it."

Though the somewhat short note gently upbraided her for remissness as a correspondent, it was replete with kindness, and she exclaimed, "I know he will let me do it!" She then told of Leila's proposal.

The father gravely listened. "Well, my dear," he replied, "it is necessary to refer this question to your guardian: be explicit as to *who* has invited you." He then departed, and Alida proceeded to write according to instructions.

Leila, also full of enthusiasm, repaired to the study, and two letters were penned at the same time and place, touching the same subject, sent together on their mission, and side by side laid on Clinton's table.

He recognized Leila's chirography first, and smiling in anticipation of girlish gossip, commenced to read; it opened with expressions of delight at the prospect of Christmas reunion, and glided into a narrative of what little was known of Alida.

Referring to the play-room episode, she added: "Just to think; she passed a vacation at the convent, not stepping her foot out of the inclosure, since she first entered. I feel sorry for the poor thing, and do hope that she will not be disappointed. She is with me writing to her guardian, for permission to accept this invitation; he must be a crusty old fellow if he refuses. I wish I had the representation of the case! I'd tell him of her ambition, and how she is taming her rude nature, and of the innate something about her that is developing into a fine character. Besides she plays and sings divinely, and the prettiest part of it is that she seems unconscious of her gifts.

"You will be surprised to find us at Shandy Hall.

Papa has been in one of his moods, so the town house remains closed. It is a relief to be away from home strain, but poor mamma has had a hard time; it was, however, lightened last spring by a visit from Cousin Edith; her keeping papa in good spirits is a relief. It would be a bright idea to ask her to spend Christmas with us, but, apart from selfishness, we would love to have her for her own sweet self."

"I fail to estimate Miss Edith as they do," Clinton thought; "though mother and Leila may be right. I'm glad they like her. However, I'm forgetting the other letter. Leila has dulled the edge of curiosity, and brought me face to face with responsibilities, perhaps rashly undertaken; for what do I know about a girl's wants and aspirations?"

"Having placed her at school, paid her bills and sent an occasional trifle, there I have stopped and left her in a convent, to pine for the old life and liberty. It shall be rectified. I will not prove recreant to my obligation. Sister's invitation is opportune."

Thus was the way opened for the granting of Alida's request, even before he read her letter, which was as follows:

"THE CONVENT, NOVEMBER —.

"DEAR GUARDIAN: In your letter, the censure of my neglect to write, is deserved, but I have been so humiliated by my effort that I determined not to attempt another writing until better able to express my appreciation of your kindness. When I remember from what you rescued me, I feel inadequate; pride, ambition, above all, the desire to please you, have spurred me on to study hard, but I would not venture to write were it not that I am in the awkward dilemma of risking your criticism, or foregoing a great pleasure.

"A school companion, a Miss Grason, has invited me to spend the Christmas holidays at her home. I should dearly love to go; but Father Littig entertains a graver

view of the matter than I can understand, and withholds his sanction, therefore my only alternative is to apply to you, who, I feel sure, will not deny me, as I promise to restrain my old wild ways, to be a very good girl, and

Your ever grateful

"ALIDA."

As he finished the reading, Clinton exclaimed: "The letter shows progress: a mind so active may run riot, unless judiciously guided. A scholastic education, of course, the sisters are competent to give, but convent culture must fall short of meeting the demands of the spirit within her bosom. Where is she to derive that fireside instruction, that home influence, that are to be the guides in after life? I must see to it; Leila's invitation will open the way." He then wrote:

"LONDON, DECEMBER —.

"MY DEAR ALIDA: Your letter is gratifying evidence of improvement. So good a girl deserves an enjoyable holiday. Go with Miss Grason. I am sure you will have a pleasant time.

"Those whom you will visit may entertain for you a sympathy because of what they may conceive to be your forlorn condition. They may evince a disposition to load you with favors; be guarded how you receive them. I would have you maintain a feeling of independence.

"You will herewith find an order on Father Littig for five hundred dollars. He will cash it. Should that not be sufficient (I know very little about young ladies' requirements in dress), you have authority to call upon the good father for whatever is requisite. He will also obtain for you permission to go into the city, with some friends, to assist you in your shopping.

"Wishing you the happiest Christmas you ever have known,

Affectionately your

"GUARDIAN."

As the letter was being folded, Mr. Merryfield

entered, and exclaimed: "Grason, old boy! I am told you are off to America? Is it that you cannot stay from the pretty little Kate? She is what Dickens would call a 'lump of love.' "

"Hold on, Merryfield! do you refer to Miss Lawton?"

"Do not put on the innocent!" his friend laughed.

"The town knows that you have been paying attention to the handsome Kate, and now that she has crossed the herring-pond, it looks suspicious that you also are going."

"Why, man, she is off to Canada, and I to Maryland; every schoolboy may go home for the holidays; that is my case, and I long for freedom from the formality of this London life."

"So, honor bright, Dame Rumor is at fault?"

"Certainly she is. There are two classes of ladies whose society I enjoy; one is the matron, who, having shuffled off youthful follies, finds pleasure in rational intercourse."

"There is nothing like variety in tastes!" was the rejoinder. "It's a dispensation of Providence; as for me, none of your dignified dames."

"You mistake, my dear fellow; you confound matrons with old maids. In the former nature develops an equilibrium. In her maternal relations she learns self-discipline, prompted by the necessity of inculcating it on her children. Inspired by a mother's love, she acquires gentleness, leniency and charity; these virtues, cultivated in the domestic circle, become adornments in society. With the old maid self-discipline merges into prudery, leniency jumps to indulgence, and for charity she gathers the gall of bitterness from disappointment's crucible. I pity the child that is reared by an old maid!"

"True enough, Grason; and when a maid and a

widow are after the same man, bet on the widow every time. As you have exercised such excellent judgment in one selection, what may be the other?"

"In this," Clinton resumed, "perhaps our tastes may agree. There is a charm in intercourse with the coy girl, who, just from school, has not discarded the modesty of nature. I love to fathom the depths of her unsophisticated mind, whose purity charms us from our grosser passions.

"It is such a fascination as this that attracted me to Miss Lawton. Her society was a refuge from maidens of riper experience in the borrowed beauty, smirking manners, and the arts they fancy help them on to wealth and wedlock. Miss Lawton and I have enjoyed some happy hours; perhaps we may never again meet. I almost trust that we may not, lest I should find her altered from the pleasant picture that I would have still hang in Memory's chamber."

"You've drawn it charmingly, Grason; I've a mind to strike for Canada myself!"

"Do so, it will make the season the merrier—join in our holiday hopes."

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CHAPTER XIII.

SILENT SYMPATHY.

THE morning before Christmas the visitors were assembled at Shandy Hall. Edith was there enjoying her aunt's company and revelling in recollections of a call from Clinton, and amusing herself with by-play upon Uncle Grason, though it was dull sport, as that relative's crustiness was always aggravated upon the approach of merry-making.

Leila and Alida had arrived the previous evening, and were brimming over with fun.

"Young ladies," Mrs. Grason requested, as the party arose from the breakfast table, "excuse the hostess who finds it incumbent to merge into the housekeeper; pies and puddings demand attention."

"We'll all have a hand," Leila proposed.

"No," Edith objected, "'too many cooks,' you know the adage; so come along, Alida, we'll retire to the parlor."

The young guest felt that Miss Edith might have answered simply for herself, as the culinary department was that particular portion of her early training which had not been neglected, but she was too new a visitor to offer remonstrance, and allowed herself to be led away, while her companion remarked: "Of course, Alida, you prefer the drawing room to the kitchen, and do well to cultivate the more elevating associations. I remember how like a little savage you were on the occasion that

aunt and I visited the convent; your war-whoop still rings in my ear."

Alida's brow contracted; she was prompted to repeat the defiance, but she quietly responded: "Leila would scarcely have invited me had she supposed me capable of discrediting her."

"The spirited minx!" Edith thought. "There is an antipathy between us. Why do I dislike her?" She watched Alida wandering through the room, apparently impressed by its elegance. "Perhaps you have never seen anything so fine?" she taunted.

"I am not sure," the girl reflected abstractedly. Her recollections were struggling in a maze, and Edith, believing that the novelty was bewildering, recalled her own sensations at beholding the grandeur of the Glen.

"Have you heard of young Mr. Grason, who is so rich?" she asked.

"Yes, Leila has spoken of him."

"You'll see him to-day, and had best repress your wildness, or his frown will frighten you."

"That's not Leila's description," Alida thought; but answering nothing she left Edith to drift with the current of pleasant thoughts that the subject had awakened, while she looked out at the sunshine, the beautiful evergreens, and the Newfoundland dog that lay stretched upon the grass. "Oh, for a romp with that big fellow!" she thought. "I'd lead him a race, and have a good mind to try." Yielding to the temptation she glided from the room, to find a more congenial companion, though only a brute. Soon they were acquaintances, and vying in fleetness as they bounded over the grassy carpet after the croquet ball, or dodging and darting among the evergreens, till Alida felt like her old self, joyous and unrestrained, and with no eye on her.

Not exactly; Edith had gone to the window. "The little savage!" she muttered; "she's in her element, and need not put on dignity." Just then she observed a horseman at the gate; there seemed to be some difficulty with the latch which caused him to dismount, and to continue on foot, leading his horse up the avenue. Presently the dog bounded through the shrubbery, pressed by Alida, cheeks aglow, and bosom heaving. Almost precipitating herself into the young man's arms, her face, and even her graceful neck, turned of a deeper crimson as she suddenly drew back.

"It's Mr. Clinton!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, and delighted I am to see you," the newcomer responded. "I have caught you at your old game. How you have grown! Or is it that dress?"

"I've had time to grow," she responded. "It seems ever so long since we parted. I have wanted so much to see you, and to tell you how far better off I am than when you first knew me."

"Improved in every way," he exclaimed, drawing her squarely before him, for a critical survey.

"It is all because I have a kind guardian," she rejoined, and nodded assuringly; "he has done everything for me, taken me from the life I was leading, had me taught music, and is ever so kind." This was uttered in breathless haste, then suddenly stopping, as a puzzling idea occurred, she resumed reflectively: "How is it that you are here? It seems strange after all that we should meet."

"Not very," Clinton replied. "My father lives here, and from my own home, which is quite near, I have come over to dine."

"Then you are Leila's brother?" The discovery recalled Edith's criticism, and she drew back with an awed look.

"Yes," he responded, amused at her perplexity.

"I thought your name was Mr. Clinton?"

"It is Clinton Grason."

"Oh, Mr. Clinton!" she exclaimed, and placed a hand on his arm while a flush again mantled her cheek, "you won't tell how we first met, or say anything of my past? Only Father Littig knows a very little about me."

"Do not be distressed," he answered; "it concerns nobody else, though an event in that past has made us comrades. Let us go to the house; some other time you will tell me all about yourself."

To Edith this seeming pantomime was enigmatical.

Leila had observed their approach, and was at the door. "I see you need no introduction!" she exclaimed. "I told you, Alida, that you would feel at home with him directly."

"While your visitor was romping with the dog," remarked Clinton, "I stole a march on her; she had not time to run away, and I improved the opportunity."

"She did not appear much like wanting to run away," mused Edith. "The minx has made more progress with him in ten minutes than I have been able to do in as many months."

Leila's was a joyous party on Christmas Eve. To Alida all was novelty, and the pleasure which the renewal of her old acquaintance afforded, beaming upon her face, enhanced a beauty that excited the question: "Who is she?" Rumor answered: "A wealthy Southerner."

During an interval in the dance she was asked to sing, but she responded: "I cannot, before these strangers," and the request being urged, she would have again refused, but her glance met Clinton's and responding to its silent language, she went to the piano.

Forgetting her identity with the first clear notes, the spirit of music held her oblivious to the startled company; at the conclusion of the song she was about to retire, when her eye again encountered Clinton's; obeying an impulse, she swept the keys, and breathed the song of "Robin Adair." Then, while the company, still under the charm, listened for another echo, she left the instrument.

Edith had remarked the interchange of glances, and she thought: "These are riddles that I cannot read."

At the call for the next set, a handsome, dark-complexioned gentleman, who had been near the piano, sought out Alida, to solicit her as partner. "Indeed, Mr. Harvey," she responded, "I have never in my life danced, and I should cut a poor figure; you would feel ashamed of me."

"That's odd!" said he. "Where on earth were you raised? Sister Helen says that none of your companions know anything about you?"

"I was raised among the mountains, up in the mists."

"Evidently you wish to *mystify* me," he rejoined.

"Not particularly; you are privileged to keep out of it."

This he had no intention of doing, for he was the reputed beau of the neighborhood, and, fancying the pretty Southern girl, determined to cultivate her acquaintance. "One so wealthy," he thought, "as she is not to be dropped at the first rebuff." Foregoing the pleasure of the dance, he chatted with her, and at the supper paid her marked attention.

Later in the evening, while a waltz was in progress, Clinton noticed Alida patting her little foot. He crossed to where she was and remarked: "That restless foot suggests a dance," and he placed his arm about her waist.

"No," she answered and drew back, "I don't know a thing about it, or I would, for I am almost dying to dance."

"Then, come, learn."

"Oh, no, I could not before all these strangers."

"Well, perhaps the waltz would be difficult, but with the next cotillion let me lead you out. I can show you quietly, and none need know but that you are proficient. It is an accomplishment that you will have to learn in your new life. Let the first dance be with me."

The ordeal was passed without mishap, and this, with his encouraging words elated her, as he said: "You have both danced and sung for me, and I feel proud of you."

"I'm sure I would have sung for no one else," she thought, "but now, I'll dance with anybody."

"You seem to be a general entertainer, Mr. Grason," Edith remarked, who made room beside her on the library sofa as he was about passing.

He stopped politely, and her tact soon engaged his attention; but their conversation was abruptly ended by a commotion in the hall. At that late hour, only a few of the more intimate guests remained, who, having laid aside formality, indulged in a country romp, during which Alida withdrew a handkerchief from her pocket, and had pulled with it her little kid glove; this fell to the floor. As a pretext for fun, several of the party sprang for it, but it was reclaimed by the owner, and then commenced a chase. Through parlor, dining-room, and hall they darted; it was just the sport for Harvey, as it afforded excellent opportunity of forcible retention of the pretty girl. He pressed after closely and caught her in the hall, rudely maintaining his advantage; it turned her fun to temper; refusing to be held, she dropped upon the floor, and stubbornly re-

"To Alida.

"May the Holy Spirit direct her in the interpretation of this volume, and may it prove her guide through life, and comfort in the Dark Valley that leads to the Hereafter.
C. G."

"How I thank you!" she exclaimed, and then with hesitation added: "I ought not to accept it; my guardian is sensitive about my being under obligations to any one but himself; he is kind to me and it would be ungrateful to disregard his wishes."

Alida little knew with what satisfaction Clinton listened to these words, nor did she fully analyze the meaning of his reply, as, with the shadow of a smile, he remarked: "Of all persons, I would be the least likely to dispute your guardian's will; but remember that upon the morning of our parting in the mountain, I told you that should we meet again I would give you a Bible. This is a redemption of that promise, made before the assumption of your guardian's authority. I think he would wave his peculiar notions, as the present comes under what the jurist calls the *ex-post facto* law; that is, it was an arrangement entered into before the exercise of his authority."

"I will give you my Bible," replied Alida, "and we will get over the difficulty by calling it a swap."

The assembling of the household interrupted further conversation. There were surprises and presents for each. Edith, coming in for a flattering remembrance from Clinton, was expressing her appreciation, when Alida approached, and handed him a package, which he simply acknowledged by a nod. It nettled Edith, who thought: "The mutual understanding between the polished millionaire and the rustic, without a farthing, and perhaps without a father, is unique."

"Alida, my dear, of course you will join our party to

church this morning?" Mrs. Grason asked, as they were about leaving the breakfast table. "The music will be grand, and we will have a sermon from Father Littig."

Before the guest could reply, and she would have answered affirmatively, Clinton responded: "She will go with me."

"Ah, Clinton!" the good lady exclaimed, "you are a sad heretic, and not only go astray yourself, but would take another with you. I protest against your having Alida."

"That's right!" the father encouraged, "don't let him hector it so."

"I fully calculated on her coming," Leila added. "You have no right to take her from us on Christmas Day."

"It is indeed too bad," Edith joined in; "it is so much nicer for all to go together."

"Really, your storm of opposition overwhelms me!" Clinton exclaimed. "Perhaps a solution of the difficulty would be to accord Miss Alida the privilege of deciding, and quickly, for I see the horses at the door."

Was it the beautiful bays that champed their bits, or was it again the silent sympathy that decided her? For Alida replied: "If you allow me the choice, Mrs. Grason, as you all combine against Mr. Clinton, I will decide in his favor."

When they had gone, Edith feelingly remarked, "I knew she would! the wild, wayward thing. I told you, aunt, that there's a mystery about them; they have been acquainted hardly twenty-four hours, yet, mark his influence."

"I do not see so much in it," the elder lady responded, "Clinton's force of character impresses every one."

"It certainly does," Leila added. "Cousin Edith

says that she played, and sang, and danced last night in obedience to a look from him; and we saw, or rather, we did not see, how he controlled her temper just before the break up. Alida's peculiarities make it difficult to explain, for you can hardly imagine how very strong is her own character."

"Child though she be," Edith responded, "and with all his dignity, she is as free, after a few hours' acquaintance, as though they had been friends for years; she almost jumped into his arms when they first met, and a moment after her hand was familiarly on his shoulder; by the time they reached the house, they were like old friends. I would not take such liberty with his lordship in a score of years."

"Nonsense!" Mrs. Grason rejoined. "Clinton is a man of the world, she, a child of nature, that does not know any better; her simplicity amuses him." Thus they chatted even to the church, and were as far from a conclusion as when they started.

At an exhilarating trot, Clinton's horses darted through the gateway. "I am glad, Alida, of your decision," he said; "you will be afforded the first opportunity of attending a Protestant church." He had his reason; he knew the world; he was aware that for his companion to be introduced by him, to be identified as his friend, would insure her a social position and welcome that would endure, even during his absence.

As he leaned forward to touch the horses, Alida glanced wistfully into his face, and wondered why a gentleman of his position and wealth should concern himself about an obscure schoolgirl?

"I wish my old guardian could know him," she thought, "and realize how kind he has been; they both have noble hearts and would fancy one another."

Clinton caught the look. "A penny for you

thoughts," he said. "Were you endeavoring to read mine?"

"I am quite sure I never should succeed," she replied. "I was just trying to solve the question of your interest in me; my present surroundings might be false colors to others, but you have seen me as a barefooted mountain girl, and are not deceived; you know me."

"That's just it, Alida, I *know* you, and with good reason; for, through your agency, my life is spared to testify. I know you for a noble, brave girl; that is enough to seal our friendship, and awaken an interest in you closer than you think."

Further conversation was interrupted by their approach to the church that Clinton loved because of the long ago, when he had there worshipped with his mother; that mother who now slept beneath an adjacent mound, over which the spring violets blossomed, and the leaves of autumn withered, renewing year by year the mystery of life and death, and within the sound of the organ's rich refrain, which mingled with the choral voices that proclaimed the glad promise of a Resurrection morn.

His attendance had been at long intervals, and was sufficiently rare to be a matter of interest. Upon this particular day, there was more than the usual stir as he pulled up his horses, and springing from the buggy, assisted Alida to alight; for her girlish grace, lithe form, and the peach like bloom upon her cheek, excited admiration.

"Who's that with Grason?" was the general inquiry.

"One of his sister's schoolmates," a gentleman answered, who had been at the party.

"You might know," responded another, "it would either be merely a girl or an elderly lady. Extremes meet in Grason's fancy; there's no intermediate, but he's on the verge of it this time!"

Clinton, pleasantly nodding to the bystanders, led his companion up the aisle. When service commenced, she shared his prayer-book, and as the organ's rich notes filled the church and the congregation with glad voices commenced the Christmas carol, Clinton whispered: "Join in the singing, Alida, it is usual."

She demurred with a little frown, but catching his wistful look, she began in clear, low notes, and then her melody, with swelling vibrations, soared to the Gothic arches, as though seeking freedom from their narrow confines.

Among the congregation were the Harveys; and when service was over, Emmart whispered to his sister: "You must invite Leila and her companion to your party; I want the opportunity of making up the row with that girl; she is worth knowing; by George! she sings like an angel, and yet what a little fury she can be."

Friends gathered about Clinton at the door, to welcome him back and to obtain a nearer look at the songstress. The ladies especially sought to take her by the hand, and Clinton felt assured that he had gained friends for his *protégé*.

It was a quiet dinner at Shandy Hall. Young Gra son received amiably his share of bantering for having enticed one of the flock to wander, and his father expressed the hope that he would in future let his sister's guest alone.

"I shall just take myself out of the way of temptation," the son replied.

"I knew it!" exclaimed the old gentleman. "You never could stay in the domestic circle twenty-four consecutive hours." The mother and sister remonstrated and Edith but poorly concealed her disappointment at the proposed departure, but it availed nothing.

"I would stay," he added, "but my appointment has been made, and I like to be punctual."

"Punctual! since when?" his father exclaimed. "It would not surprise me to hear that you had dropped fifty engagements, and suddenly sailed to Kamtchatka."

"The greater reason I should now redeem my character," Clinton argued; and it being announced that the buggy was at the door, he forthwith excused himself.

A moment later Alida joined him in the hall. "Mr. Clinton," she said, "my going to church with you was a great pleasure; let me give you these wristlets as a slight evidence of my appreciation of your kindness."

She proceeded to place them over his hands, coloring prettily, while adding: "Of course they are as homely as she who knit them, but they will help keep you warm."

"They will remind me of a warm-hearted girl," he replied, "and they will prove another pledge of our friendship."

The door closed behind him. Edith caught the last words as she crossed the hall, and her eyes shot defiance at the still blushing girl, as she jerked out: "'Tis said:

" 'Sudden friendships rarely live to ripeness.'"

Yours, Miss Presumption, with Mr. Grason, is scarcely a day old."

"However that may be," Alida retorted, "it happens to be knit up in a pair of pulse warmers; they'll hardly ravel out before the end of the season."

"You surely have not presented the horrible coarse things to that exquisite gentleman!" Edith laughed derisively.

"Why not?" Alida questioned, and with intuition of her enemy's vulnerability, provokingly added: "They are to warm his pulses, and then his heart will pulsate

with a kindly feeling for her who knit them." Their eyes met; the one saw that the shaft had gone home, the other awakened to the dread of an actual and artful rival, and the more dangerous because mysterious.

Clinton leaned back in the comfortable buggy, behind the lively stepping bays. As they approached the rectory, Walter said: "Hyar's a pa'cel, sir, which Miss Ellen sont to be left for de priest."

"Christmas cheer, I suppose. Well, stop at the gate; I'll carry it in."

"Ah, Mr. Grason!" Father Littig exclaimed. "I am g'lad to see you; it is kind of you to call."

"The compliments of the season, father! The mistress of Shandy Hall has sent them to you more substantially with this basket."

"She is ever kind," the priest responded. "Come, join me in a glass of wine," and he placed a decanter and glasses on the table. "By the way," he said, as a package met his eye, "here is something addressed to you; the sender little supposed that it would reach its destination this side the Atlantic."

It proved to be a pair of embroidered slippers from Alida, accompanied by an acknowledgement of the check, and a wish for a happy Christmas!

"Now that you have seen your *protégé*, what do you think of her?" Father Littig asked.

"Her improvement is marked," Clinton responded. "Sensitiveness about her deficiencies has awakened ambition, which, if overindulged, may entail physical sin."

The father looked inquiringly.

"Her moral sins," resumed Clinton, "would come within your province, her intellectual sins are combatted by the teachers, but who will look to the physical sin against God's fairest temple? and to what advan-

tage do we rear the mental structure, if the physical fabric be abused? With the advantage which nature afforded her she has established a foundation, which, if maintained, will develop into womanhood of rare beauty, but in order to maintain a perfect whole, she needs a mental curb, otherwise aspiration will o'erleap itself, and the flower fade."

The father's eye thoughtfully rested on Clinton, who, supposing that he considered the picture highly colored, continued: "The subject is not overestimated; ambitious young ladies have stepped from their academic career loaded with honors, which proved too heavy, and they sank into untimely graves. I trust that those who watch over our charge may preserve her, lithe and lovely, as we received her at Nature's hand."

A dubious smile played over the priest's face. "It was a delicate question," he remarked, "this granting permission to spend her holiday with your sister, especially in connection with your return; it might have proved safer had the visit been with another school-mate."

"What matters it?" Clinton replied. "Our secret is secure; besides, her visit to Shandy Hall affords the opportunity of studying her disposition."

"Dangerous ground!" the father rejoined. "You toy with what may wound you."

"I do not understand?"

"What has awakened your interest in this child? Is it not sympathy?"

"Yes, and also gratitude."

"Exactly! but sympathy first, the desire to rescue her took shape ere the occurrence which awakened the additional motive. Sympathy is twin sister to the heart's divinest passion."

"We may feel sympathy without tender emotion; you would not imply danger of love entanglement?"

"She is fair; sympathy is the golden key which unlocks the heart. You may be proof against the holier passion, but 'he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall.' Remember you are playing on a hungry heart, that has been famishing for sympathy and love; the former you already offer, and when she shall realize *that*, she may yearn for the other."

"Father, I would not recklessly toy with a human heart, and awaken a sentiment I could not return. This mere child surely will not entertain such emotions."

"You form your estimate as though she were still in benighted childhood; under fairer auspices she is advancing, and all at once will waken to sensitive womanhood."

Clinton gazed into the grate as if to catch a spark that would light the way to the truth on this question, and he pondered over the startling suggestion as to whether himself or the girl could be in danger. Arriving at no other conclusion than a feeling of irritability toward the propounder of the problem, he thought: "Confound the suspicious priest! Who but he would ever entertain such an idea?" Controlling himself, he replied: "I cannot but feel that you take too serious a view. The blindfolded deity will do no mischief; but of course, after your warning, I will be on guard, and upon the slightest appearance of danger will retreat."

"It were well to do so. I am glad that you have brought to my notice the question of the child's health. It shall be regulated; but remember, that the body, fair though it be, is only the casket of something more precious—the immortal soul—what of that? Unguided, undisciplined, shall it run riot? Even physical loveliness is marred by the cankerworm of sin!"

“He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall.”



"It is a grave subject, from which we ought not to shrink, father. I would willingly accord her the opportunity of learning the doctrines of your Church, but desire that she should have the privilege of investigating religious subjects and deciding as inclination may dictate."

"I have been pained," the priest replied, "to observe the child drifting all at sea on subjects of religion. Thanks to your liberality, my scruples are at rest."

"You've a harder task than you think!" was Clinton's reflection, as he drove into the city.

Father Littig, left to his meditations, associated Clinton and Alida as objects of spiritual interest. "Of their temporal destinies," he thought, "time must prove whether my fancies are at fault; but both are pilgrims wandering in dark ignorance of our holy faith; be it my privilege to open to them the door of spiritual life; then Blessed Virgin guide them into the fold!"

CHAPTER XV.

SYMPATHY'S SISTER.

SNOW, followed by a cold snap, added the new feature to the Harvey party of skating, and the guests were invited to come early.

"Oh, what fun it will be!" exclaimed the mercurial Leila. "I always did go wild over skating; it's the poetry of motion. Alida, we must see you scud the ice."

"I have never been on skates," she responded.

"We will find a pair; you will soon learn; it will be fun to see you reeling about as if your head and heels were at odds. Cousin Edith, you of course can skate?"

"Yes, a little, but I am not a sufficient adept to enjoy it; you shall not have a laugh on me; I'll come later, and be at the dance."

"How shall we manage?" Leila questioned. "I thought we were all to pile into the big sleigh."

"We will call Clinton into requisition," Mrs. Grason suggested.

"One feels a delicacy about trespassing on him," Edith hinted; and glancing at Alida, she insinuated: "We cannot all take that liberty."

"You may quiet your scruples," her aunt decided. "I know Clinton, and can ask this favor."

"It would be well to send a messenger to him at once," Leila suggested. "We have not seen brother since the Christmas dinner; there's no telling where he

is, whether sniffing ashes at the Glen, or out on a spree."

"Hush! Leila," her mother reproved. "Strangers, hearing such a remark, might take it literally."

"One so reticent," Edith intimated, "invites suspicion, and neither 'his sisters, nor his cousins, nor his aunts' be the wiser." Observing Alida's flash of indignation, she added: "Well, Miss Fire, and what's he to you, or you to him, for that matter, that you should bristle up?"

"He is absent," Alida rebuked, "and I will defend him."

"Leave that to those who have a right, and who know him better," retorted Edith; "you know nothing about him." Had not self-complacency blinded her, she might have been puzzled by the smile that played over Alida's face.

As later on the stylish team trotted down the avenue, Edith remarked: "It was kind of you, Cousin Clinton, to drive out of your way for me."

"Really it was a pleasure," answered that young gentleman, as he glanced at her pretty face, which looked as though its owner had never uttered an ungenerous word.

"I should think that you would find it difficult to drag yourself from your beautiful home?" resumed his companion. "Aunt Ellen and I drove out there last spring. What an odd character is the old housekeeper!"

"A good woman, nevertheless, and a comfort to me."

"It must be lonely for you, without congenial companions?"

"When the need of company is felt," Clinton replied, "I seek the world. In fact, I bustle about so much that the quiet of home is a relief at times."

"One would suppose," she rejoined, "that home,

with none to share its restful fireside, or the busy world, with no friend as companion in its walks, would be equally desolate."

"With some," Clinton responded, "friendships are of slow growth. I had two dear friends, united by bonds of sympathy and gratitude; both are gone, leaving a blank."

"Has no one entered into the lonely heart, to fill the void?" she asked softly, as she scrutinized his face with a keenness that was concealed behind coquetry.

"There is one," he responded, "that I may claim as comrade."

"Oh, pshaw! some man," Edith thought, and with difficulty restrained the petulant exclamation, as Clinton resumed: "But we rarely meet, and the spark of friendship may fade ere it can kindle into an enduring flame."

"Your *will* power," contended Edith, "could gain you one friend. I have remarked your influence over others. You could claim what companions you pleased; even your father's eccentricities are modified in your presence."

"He regards me as company; we see but little of each other."

"The explanation is hardly sufficient," Edith rejoined. "Aunt also is devoted to you; such is not always the case with stepmothers; and Leila adores you."

"They are both so loving that they cannot help it."

"Even that wild girl, Alida, is changed in your presence, though in the opposite way from what one would expect. Instead of your dignity exercising a controlling influence, you seem to be the only being with whom she is entirely unrestrained."

"Your observations are so astute," responded Clinton, "that no aid from me is required in solving the mystery of magnetism."

Thus they chatted and, like an angler, Edith tried her line with every conceivable bait that might suit the lights and shadows of his nature; but a provoking coolness met her at every turn and a vague anxiety possessed her lest the bright rays of his truthful character divine her schemings.

Meanwhile the skaters were having a fine time, especially Harvey, in his adroit endeavors to become reinstated in Alida's good graces. He fastened her skates, and more deliberately than seemed necessary to an impatient pupil, then supporting her upon the ice, his efforts were untiring to instruct. While others glided across their track, he toiled with his companion; her rosy cheeks and graceful form bewitched him, while responsive to her merry eye her laughter rang like a silvery ripple. Old athletic sports served her well; she caught the skater's motion, much to Emmart's regret, for she soon showed her independence of the supporting arm. With its every effort to encircle her she would glide out of reach. At these darts and dodges the teacher well-nigh lost temper, especially when he read in her roguish eye the pleasure they afforded her.

Finally, as they rested at a rustic bench by the edge of the lake, Harvey exclaimed: "Let's call a truce, and pledge to mutual friendship—'As chaste as ice.' "

"And quite as brittle!" laughed Alida, darting off, and eluding pursuit. Perhaps she had caught a glimpse of the bays, as they rounded the curve, or it may have been an extra effort to keep beyond Emmart's reach, but her ankle twisted awkwardly, and down she dropped. Harvey lifted her, but she was unable to stand, and again sank.

Clinton, who had witnessed the accident, hastened to the edge of the lake, and handing the reins to Edith, he worked his way through the circle that had gathered

around. He knew Alida's pluck, and felt assured that she was badly hurt, but, with encouraging words, he gently lifted her, and bearing her off the ice, he deposited her beside Edith and drove quickly to the mansion.

"It is not much of a hurt, don't let it make a disturbance," Alida whispered, as she was being conveyed into the house.

Mrs. Harvey conducted the way to the library, where nimble fingers removed boot and stocking. The ankle was too swollen for the extent of injury to be determined.

"Wrap up the foot in something soft," Clinton said. "I will drive her home, calling for the doctor as we go; this will be the quickest way of getting relief."

Hospitable Mrs. Harvey demurred at the proposal, while Leila and Edith expressed a wish to accompany the patient.

"Thanks! Mrs. Harvey," replied Clinton, "we had better go." To the young ladies he answered: "There is no use breaking up your pleasure; besides, the large sleigh is a slow fix, and there is no room in my cutter."

This arrangement was satisfactory to Alida, but two of the party were disconcerted.

"Confound the fellow!" thought Emmart, as the cutter glided away. "This is twice he has stepped in between me and that girl; I'll bounce him; what business is it of his? She is not under his charge. If mother had insisted on keeping her, the prize would have been mine; rich, rare, and racy, they are the three r's for me."

"There she goes," Edith reflected, who also watched the departure; "she takes my seat and monopolizes him. Thank heaven! the minx has hurt herself; she has been in my path, but after this she will be out of it for

awhile." Her eyes encountered Emmart's, and found a kindred spirit.

Clinton tucked the robe around his suffering charge, and giving the horses rein, they darted with a speed that left the wind behind.

"Oh! what a glorious ride it would be," Alida thought, "if only this foot did not hurt;" but pain, added to gratitude for her companion's tenderness, caused the mist to gather in her eye. "How unfortunate!" she said, "that I should be the cause of your leaving the party. Leila is disappointed, and I could see Miss Edith's annoyance."

"Don't worry, little comrade," replied Clinton, as he wound an arm around her. "What matters all who are left, compared to you? And whose place is it but mine, to take care of—" He checked himself, and the lines upon his face grew rigid. "Nonsense!" he thought, "it is a foolish sympathy," and the arm was withdrawn. As they rounded a curve, a shift in position loosened Alida's wraps, and as he replaced them he noticed her wan expression.

"Does your ankle hurt very badly?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

The sleigh just then glided over a slight eminence, and she was swayed toward him; the arm once more supported her form, closer, closer still he drew it; there was a thrill of pleasure in the contact; it seemed as though something divinely pure was pervading his famishing soul. So tightly did he hold her, that she must have felt the wild impulse of his heart. He did not trust himself to speak, nor was the spell broken until they arrived at the doctor's. The message being given for him to follow, again they glided through the twilight. The pain of the injured foot increased, and Alida, in innocent confidence, rested her head upon Clinton's shoulder.

Arriving at the Hall, he carried her from the sleigh and placed her upon the sofa in her own room; he then kneeled beside her. His earnest gaze almost frightened her, and well it might, for wild passion was raging in his bosom. At last it ended in a long-drawn sigh, which Alida interpreted as his sympathy, and resting a hand upon him, she said: "I feel very grateful." If possible, the anguish of his look grew deeper; he uttered as if with pain, "Good-by!" and abruptly left her.

During the drive to the Glen Clinton's brow was shadowed by a gloom. He was recalling the warning, though in the language of his own Bible, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall!" He staggered into his library, sank upon the sofa, and buried his face in his arm.

As fire refines metal, as the frosty finger of departing winter reaches back to test the hardihood of blossoms, as the tempest tries the forest pines, so Clinton's sorrow-swept soul was strained and riven. At last there came a calm, and he was resolute and strong, and pure as the icy crystals that, with morning beams, sparkled like dazzling diamonds.

"I love her! yes; but read no answering emotion in her dear face. No, Clinton Grason, fulfill your trust *unselfishly!*"

A week later, as the Hall family were assembled in the library, Leila exclaimed: "I wonder where brother is? Nobody has seen him since the night of the Harvey's party."

This was a question which Edith had silently propounded, and derived as little satisfaction.

"It certainly is curious!" Mrs. Grason remarked. "One would think that he might feel solicitude regarding the accident."

To Alida, this comment recalled his last few moments

with herself; the strange look, the good-by! what did they mean? From these reflections she was awakened by Edith's question: "What did you do, Alida, to scare him off? You are responsible, having been the last one in his company."

"I am sure I cannot tell!" she answered. A feeling of Edith's hostility restrained her from comment, but she had missed him quite as much as the others, and her conjectures were equally as vague.

"I know him!" Mr. Grason growled (he had been reading the paper); "and this list of passengers, which I have had the curiosity to look up, tells the story. He left in the Scotia, on the second instant. Home scarcely a week, tired already, faces a wintry ocean, silently sails away."

CHAPTER XVI.

GUIDING HAND.

NOTWITHSTANDING Alida's accident, the Christmas holiday was a fortunate era to her. She had entered a new school of culture, and returned to the academy with freshened impulse.

Writing to her guardian, she alluded to Mr. Clinton's attentions, but refrained from reference to their earlier acquaintance; for, with awakened delicacy, she thought that the "old gentleman," though kind, might not understand. She then expressed her newborn aspirations.

To the interesting letter, Clinton thus replied:

"PARIS.

"DEAR ALIDA: Your description of Christmas doings is at hand.

"I was gratified to learn that you had a pleasant holiday, and that your skating accident did not prove more serious: at least it served as additional evidence that this time your lot has been cast among kind friends.

"I am pleased with the evidence which your letter affords of improvement; but you have fallen into the error of too circumscribed a view of the object for which I placed you at school; and by a misdirected ardor are narrowing your efforts to the mere struggle for scholastic pre-eminence.

"Recitations acquired by the cramming process prove evanescent; the overburdened brain assimilates poorly; its influence serves for the day only, and is lost; it may be in the wreck of hope, happiness, and health.

Commencement laurels will not compensate for these disasters. Look rather to acquiring habits of thought and application, and conduct your studies with the broad view of the future. Above all, I warn you that your physical powers will not stand the strain that you propose to put upon them.

a "By the circumstance of early surroundings, your mind, neither debilitated by work nor warped by stimulants, has healthfully expanded. The freedom of your childhood should have developed your physical form into one of rare perfection. From the sparkling rivulet you quaffed the elixir of life. In search of wild flowers, the rough rocks over which you sprang imparted their hardy nature to your limbs; from the tapering pine, as the tempest swayed it, you caught the grace of motion; and as you stood upon the mountain summit, the breeze, untainted from the far-off ocean, painted on your cheek the bloom of health and beauty.

"I do not flatter, but would have you estimate the good gifts that nature has bestowed. 'You are the temple of the living God;' as such, revere it.

"Your school life will be a short period of preparation for the social position which it is my desire that you shall adorn; let me not be disappointed at my coming, and find but a faded flower. I wish you to be fair, alike in mind, and form, and feature, as the result of the ideal training of a somewhat eccentric guardian; and let my pride in you be the excuse for this prosy portion of my letter."

"He is a queer old gentleman!" thought Alida. "What can he know of my life? He has never been at pap's. Evidently he has a way of finding out about me. How odd, for an old man, that he has fancies about personal looks! I'd be terribly mortified, if, when he comes to inspect, he should be disappointed."

On a holiday afternoon in June, while she was walking in the grove, Sister Filomina met her, whose kindness had first won her wayward nature. "Alida!" she exclaimed, "here you are idling, while ambitious girls

are putting to account the moments before the final examination. I have more pride for you than you seem to have for yourself."

"Thank you, sister! but of the audience on commencement day there will be not one to care whether I take a prize."

"But you have a guardian, to whom you should show your appreciation by gratifying the pride that he will naturally feel."

"His pride is of a different nature, and looks beyond the triumphs of a commencement. He is more concerned about my manners than my mind; rather with my body than my book."

The placid sister was shocked.

Alida continued: "Perhaps he thinks that my mind will take care of itself, but that my morals and manners need looking after."

"He must be eccentric," her companion exclaimed; "and with a ward equally so, what, my poor child, is to become of you?"

"Though his way may seem peculiar, he directs my training. You would not think I was forgotten did you see the presents he sends, as though I was some spoiled child."

"Which I very much fear you are," the sister rejoined. "This results from Mother Superior not maintaining a supervision of your correspondence. What becomes of these presents?"

"Father Littig takes care of them; he knows that they would not be allowed here."

"Yes, Father Littig is dreaming of a proselyte, and spoils you."

"We do not disobey convent rules," Alida retorted; "but in no event has Mother Superior the right to come between my guardian and myself."

"Child!" Sister Filomina exclaimed, "you are presumptuous to criticise the mother; our discipline does not admit of it."

"I wish to be respectful," the girl exclaimed; "it is a duty which my guardian exacts; he would have me correct old rudenesses, and be a lady in his own exalted sense of womanhood, which embraces the natural as well as the moral—the physical no less than the mental graces. I would not have him find me weak and head-achy, like some girls who are striving after prizes."

"Will he be with you during the coming vacation?"

"Probably not; again I may be indebted for my holiday enjoyment to schoolmates. Helen Harvey has invited me."

"It is my duty to caution you," Sister Filomina remarked, "though you may not need it so much as you did last Christmas. Helen's brother has an unenviable reputation. You will owe it to self-respect to restrain your mercurial spirits, and not romp as I hear you have done."

As Alida listened seemingly humbly, the monitress continued: "This warning, my dear, is prompted by information which has reached us of your indiscretions with young Mr. Grason, who is reputed to be wealthy, with nothing to do but enjoy himself in a loose, if not a profligate, way." An ominous cloud gathered on Alida's brow. The sister, not observing it, proceeded: "Remember your youth and innocence, with no natural protector, and only a remote guardian. A wild, reckless young man is scarcely a character for a girl to be on terms of sufficient intimacy with to be taking long rides after night, and actually allowing him to carry her in his arms. You are too old for that, Alida. A young lady should be more circumspect; of course you meant no harm, and being a child in thoughts and

ways, you suspected none in others; the young gentleman took advantage of your guilelessness."

"May I ask your informant?"

"I am only at liberty to say that it was derived from a lady acquainted with the parties, and who feels an interest in yourself, for she has suggested that you be guarded against Mr. Grason. You should be circumspect, my child."

"And so should you, Sister Filomina, before you lend yourself to a slanderer," Alida rejoined, with difficulty suppressing her emotion. "Shut up in a convent, you cannot judge of him, and you are misguided by some contemptible mischief-maker. I have good reason to know Mr. Grason, perhaps better than any one else does."

"Child, you are beside yourself! It is not possible that you could be intimately connected with this man; I am shocked at you!"

"I know him," Alida persisted. "I have tried him; none shall slander him in my presence."

"Tried him!" the sister exclaimed. "I fear you are treading on dangerous ground." Her tone was gentle now, for she felt sorrowful. It subsided Alida's emotion into a quiet dignity, as she replied:

"Do not think of me, sister, as only a passionate child, ignorant of the world. I have perhaps seen more than you suspect; I know the base from the pure, and can protect myself."

She drew her graceful figure to its height, and there was a proud expression on her face. Sister Filomina had never before seen so queenly a beauty, and she felt that Alida's words were true, though they added to her mystery. "It seems but yesterday," she thought, "that she was a rude, wayward child; to-day she is a noble woman; what curriculum has wrought it?"

CHAPTER XVII.

GOLDEN DREAMS.

THE commencement was over, with its realizations and disappointments. As had been arranged, Alida went to the Harveys, but hospitable neighbors were not disposed to resign her to them. Just after some callers had departed, having extended an invitation, Helen wound her arm in that of her young guest, as she said: "We cannot spare you for these visits, having lost you at the Christmas frolic, owing to that miserable accident. You must remain with us, but we will compromise on neighborly calls."

"You are kind," Alida responded, "but I owe at least a short stay with Leila."

"Nonsense!" Helen persisted; "remember, Mr. Clinton Grason is not there, nor is Miss Edith. You would find it dull, for the old man is cross as two sticks."

"I consider myself rather a favorite with him," Alida rejoined; "and independently of that, Leila is my earliest friend; but for her interest I might not now be enjoying your hospitality."

"As you are so persistent, perhaps you anticipate young Mr. Grason's return. When is he expected?"

"I have not heard of his coming; it is doubtful if even his family know of his plans; his departure last winter when I was at Shandy Hall illustrates his way of doing."

"Oh, yes!" Helen observed. "I remember Edith's remark at the time; she connected you with it as being the last one in his company."

"He took me to Shandy Hall from the skating accident, as you know, and immediately after he went abroad; many things may have influenced one of such wide connections. I fail to see how I can be associated with it."

"You do? Are you sure you didn't kick him on the rump back? It looks like it; circumstantial evidence is against you."

"Kick him!" Alida exclaimed. "How could I with a sprained ankle, the pain of which was almost intolerable? I nearly fainted."

"Ha! ha!" Helen laughed, "you are sure you are not *fainting* now? Didn't you give him the mitten? Don't know that either? Didn't you refuse him? Didn't you say 'No!' when he asked you to run away with him?"

"He has not asked me," Alida protested, with reserve. "What put such a notion into your head? At least do not try to put it into mine. Mr. Grason moves in the fashionable circles of two continents. He recognizes in me an ignorant schoolgirl, and he has no more thought of me in the relation you suggest than I have of him."

"I am not so foolish as you think," Helen persisted. "Mr. Grason is eccentric, as everybody knows, and not the least curious thing about him was his fancy for a 'rude schoolgirl,' as you style yourself; it was more marked because he never was before known to notice a girl. For amusement he may be trying to turn your head, then cast you off—that's foreign training; so be shy of him, especially if Emmart's estimate be correct. He says: 'Grason is a rake, and the girls are afraid of him.' I don't believe *that*; the more of a wild blade a

fellow is the better they like him, each believing herself the one ordained to reform him."

"Mr. Grason is in need of no such feminine sacrifice," Alida remonstrated. "It would not be well for Mr. Harvey to defame him in my presence."

Helen remarked the added warning of her eye and expostulated: "Don't get into one of your tantrums; they frighten me. I'll caution brother."

She did, for that afternoon as he went to order the horses for a ride, she followed him and said: "As you court Alida's esteem, brother, make no remark to her concerning Clinton Grason. This morning I intimated something to his disparagement, and she flared up most decidedly."

"Do you think there is anything serious between them?"

"No, not now; but there is a mysterious sympathy, and be assured your chances will improve by not alluding to him."

"Grason has put me aside twice in this game," Emmart sulked; "let him beware next time!"

"Attempt nothing rash; to anger him would ruin you with her."

Half an hour later the spirited pony was at the horse-block. "Take care!" Emmart cautioned, as he stood in front of the horse's head and grasped both sides of the bit; "the beast is wild; mount quietly." There was a mischievous twinkle in Alida's eye, flushing with pleasure. She gathered the reins and springing into the saddle, gave the pony a cut which caused him to break away and excite general alarm; but the rider's graceful seat and laughter reassured them.

"You sit a horse better than you skate," her escort remarked as they rode off.

"I am at home mounted," the exhilarated girl exclaimed.

"There must be no sequel like that at the skating party, when you were rudely dragged from before my very eyes. With a lady in charge, I will next time not submit to interference."

The cloud that gathered on Alida's brow recalled the warning, and he sought diversion in the question: "Where did you learn to ride?"

"In the saddle," was the seemingly *naïve* reply. "At the South we scarcely know how we learn; it comes naturally."

"Then this pony must be too tame?"

"I'll not find fault with the pony; he is giving me a nice ride; but I will not refuse any mount that you might choose for me."

Thus they chatted, and not again verging on a dangerous subject the ride proved so pleasant that it was the forerunner of others and not until three days before the close of vacation could Alida break away and go to Shandy Hall.

And now the summing up! How many gradations could be reckoned between liking and love? As to Harvey, they could be easily estimated: fancy for variety, a greed of gain, a charming art, a beautiful face, each a quick gradation, until what love was in him was stirred to its depths. Regarding Alida, a conclusion was even more readily reached; her dislike was overcome; she even pleurably associated her late escort with the pony; that was all, and it afforded too slim a hook to hang a hope on. The summer was gone, with its opportunities, for ere another season Grason would likely return to cross him. "So surely as he does," Emmart growled, "I'll put his chunk out," and this prospect was all that was left in lieu of vanished visions. Home lost its attractions, and he resumed his loafing ways.

One evening, while smoking on the portico of the Tavern, a congenial companion thus accosted him: "Well, Harvey, old fellow! it's been so long since I've seen you, let's have a 'smile.' Where have you been? Ah! I know, dancing attendance on a girl."

Emmart's several drinks loosened his tongue upon the congenial subject. "Yes, Noland," he responded, "I've been dancing to the tune of a rich wife; that girl is all a fellow wants; young, pretty, smart, sings like a nightingale, and makes the ivory howl; while with it all, *she's wealthy*."

"I grant you each of your conclusions except the last," his companion responded. "Account for the wealth?"

"I infer it from the lavish manner in which her guardian supplies her. Of course, it is her own money that is expended. She has no parents to question whom she may marry; her guardian is away and never sees her; the priest has no influence; so all I have to do is to go in and win."

"You are in a bit of a hurry; she's a mere child."

"There is nothing like being in time, on account of that fellow, Grason; I believe that he, too, is after the girl, and I suspect that she fancies him, for though she is a queer piece, one that most chaps can do very little with, he seems to have some influence over her; but I've the inside track."

"There your fancy is fallacious, dearest Harvey."

"What do you know about it?"

"I know that Grason is after your girl, so you may as well surrender; for though you may have the glitter, he has the gold."

"The girl does not calculate that way."

"Most girls do. Anyway she likes him. I happened to be standing at the Tavern window late one evening

after Christmas, and saw Grason dash past in a sleigh, as if all the Tam O'Shanter witches were after him, and there was a little witch by his side resting her head upon his shoulder as lovingly as anything you ever saw. Young ladies don't do that way unless they like a fellow. Did she ever take your broad bosom for a pillow? She has left you nothing but your golden dreams."

CHAPTER XVIII.

RECALLED.

SHORTLY after Clinton had "faced the wintry ocean," referred to by his father, he stepped into his London quarters, gathered the thread of business, and hurried on to Russia to inspect his interests there. His agents knew no more than his relatives when to expect him, for he had learned the principles of business—secrecy, celerity, integrity. Returning westward he stopped at Paris, and it was there that he had mapped out Alida's academic course. Thence he loitered in the capitals of Europe, until the London season called him to the world's metropolis.

In the autumn the letters from two schoolgirls awakened solicitude; Alida's was an ingenuous account of her visit to the Harveys; Leila's described a lonely vacation and expressed disappointment in the school-mate who had only found time to spend with her the last few days of vacation. She added: "The attention which she received from Emmart was too marked not to be noted, and Alida, being reputed rich, one may entertain suspicion of an acknowledged fortune-hunter. Mother says that he is none too good for an elopement, and what greater incentive could he have? She is rich, pretty and talented, with plenty of romance, no experience, no parents, and a guardian out of reach. There is nothing to prevent."

Later, another letter from Leila detailed their prog-

pects of approaching Christmas, in which she stated: "I have of course asked Alida to join us, but she declines; the Harveys claimed her.

"There is to be a fox-hunt, and Emmart, having detected her fancies, has promised her a 'high flyer.' That's the attraction. There is nothing too reckless for him to plan, or for her to perform; they are matched in that regard.

"Perhaps my uneasiness is influenced by disappointment in Alida. Out of the convent she is beyond the jurisdiction of the sisters; Father Littig lets her go where she pleases, and her remote guardian either does not know or care about her. She drifts at the mercy of her wayward fancies; or of those whom I cannot but think designing. I wish that you were here, for you certainly exercise an influence over the wayward girl."

It is not surprising that Leila's letter occasioned forebodings, and some of the reasons which had influenced a departure whispered a recall, as Clinton reflected: "Leila is right. I only can counteract this dangerous influence. The villain is capable of anything. I must not shrink from responsibility, however painful will be the task."

Lord Kilray and Mr. Merryfield were planning an American tour, and Clinton's proposed return suggested to him the opportunity of reciprocating their own hospitality, so that toward the close of a December evening the foreign gentlemen, guided by their host, dropped in at the Glen.

The family at the Hall were startled by an invitation to Christmas dinner, and Randolph Conrad and his sister Edith were wired to join them. The Glen, which had long been quiet, was awakened with merriment, and its table bent under the good cheer which the best

market of the world and the tributaries of the Chesapeake afforded. The plump, Cherry-stone oysters, as they lay upon pearly shells, claimed no kinship with the diminutive, coppery-tasting bivalves of English waters. The choice diamond-backs, were no less rarities, for they seldom took a trip across the ocean; the canvas-back was a hitherto unknown dish, and the egg-nog a novel nectar.

The spirits of the guests partook of the coloring of their rosy wine. Even Clinton's father was in a genial mood. He seemed particularly to enjoy the companionship of Lord Kilray, and after dinner they strolled among the paintings.

Edith challenged Mr. Merryfield to a bout at billiards, Randolph enjoyed a talk with Aunt Ellen, and Clinton, left with Leila, lounged in the library, indulging in a smoke, while she retailed the gossip of the day. How much of this he heard is questionable. His thoughts were floating with the fumes of his cigar, at last he questioned: "Is Miss Lucett at the Harveys?"

"Yes."

"Their intimacy continues then?"

"It does; and as at last vacation Alida and Emmart are together constantly."

"It will blow over," her brother asserted. "Miss Alida is not the character to follow his lead. Her training has not been of hot-bed development, and she is yet a child in tastes and aspirations."

"She is a singular girl!" Leila meditated. "Even intimate friends would hesitate to question her. Just now, Mr. Harvey and herself are reading poetry together."

"A bad sign certainly," Clinton acknowledged. "The blossom poetry sometimes ripens into romance, but there is no warmth in Mr. Harvey's nature to mature it."

"like wine, fine art will improve by age. Had you remained with Old England, it would now be on a higher level."

"Perhaps," Mr. Grason answered. "Had England proved a kind mother, though we might not so soon have 'tamed a wilderness and spanned a continent,' yet we would not have nursed that republicanism which has attracted to our shores that scum of creation who make our land a hospital for their moral leprosy, mistake liberty for license, and flaunt the red rag of communism."

"Ah!" Merryfield exclaimed, "but for that casting vote in Parliament, we might still be lovingly united."

"And the clock of progress set back a century!" thought Randolph, whose patriotism was only bridled by his politeness.

Coffee having been served, the guests from the Hall departed, and the Glen gentlemen resolved themselves into a whist party, which lasted till they had touched the bottom of the eggnog bowl.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FOX-HUNT.

As dawn glimmered in the east, on the day of the hunt, Clinton took from the antlers in the hall a silver-mounted steer's horn, and with it he blew a blast, clear, and shrill, and loud, and long, that startled the old lord, who had turned over for a second nap, brought Merryfield fairly to his feet, and routed Randolph from his room.

The gentlemen, being familiar with such sport, were expeditious; breakfast was quickly dispatched, and within the hour they were cantering up the avenue at Shandy Hall.

There, too, "the horn of the hunter (had been) heard on the hill," and the ladies were in readiness.

The meet presented a lively scene. A considerable party, representing the fashion of an opulent neighborhood, had already assembled. The ladies chatted, notwithstanding the restlessness of their horses; for the intelligent creatures enjoyed the excitement, and the dogs fraternized, being bent on a common cause; while their masters conferred about the start.

Groups of field hands also advised among themselves, making their suggestions as to Reynard's probable movements. "As good a way as ary," recommended a native, "is to take across Lowns' meadow, past his stacks, and follow the ridge. When we was haulin'

fodder we seed a red fox wi' a chicken, a-runnin' past them stacks, an' makin' fer dehills."

"Jis' so!" exclaimed an ebony-faced darky, who was showing his ivories, "fer Jo, he cum'd out'n his cabin t'other mornin' wi' a pan o' dish water, an' he seed a fox a-trottin' thro' his very yard; he drap the pan, gev a yell fer de purp, an' all b'arh'aded as he war, tuck out a'tern 'im. The purp he kem along, an' they kep' up the run fur as Lowns' mill; by that time Jo war blow'd, but the purp, he kep' on an' he war only a thirteen-month-old, but he followed that ere fox tel he run'd him to y'arth in them hills, an hour by sun."

Just then the Harveys and Alida rode up. Clinton recognized the former by a slight bow, and advanced toward their guest for a more cordial greeting. Her exclamation of astonishment was cut short by the restlessness of her horse, and the hand which she had extended had suddenly to grasp the rein. The wild eye of the refractory beast excited Clinton's solicitude, and he exclaimed: "I fear you have a dangerous mount!"

"He's Mr. Harvey's selection, and one to take the fences." Her tone of bravado was more pronounced because of her irritation at showing to disadvantage.

"That creature requires a practiced rider," Clinton observed.

"You have not been with me to know my riding qualities," Alida answered, "nor is there any one to dictate my mount." The horse caused her to snap out the answer somewhat abruptly.

"However self-confident you may be," Clinton replied, with increased concern, "I would gladly exchange horses." His wistful look might have impressed her had not the beast, which was pawing as though digging her grave, demanded all Alida's attention. Just then Emmart called: "Come, Miss Alida!" and glancing at

Clinton, he haughtily added: "You need not trouble yourself, the lady will do well enough; I shall be with her."

Clinton did not respond, but a shadow deepened on his face. Edith observed it, and a satisfied smile brightened her own countenance; and as she rode by she called: "Come, Cousin Clinton, hurry, or we will leave you."

The hounds were in full career, the Harvey party following, and Lord Kilray close behind. Those from the Hall proceeded more leisurely. Edith was a timid rider, and Merryfield gallantly preferred her company to that of the fox. Leila, too, lingered, and Clinton assumed a position near her.

"Grason, you are not riding with usual spirit," Merryfield exclaimed. "I've seen the time when you would have led the field on that chestnut."

"Lord Kilray is so enthusiastic a sportsman," Clinton responded, "that he will consider the capture of the brush a national victory. I wish to enjoy seeing him win it."

Edith was convinced that something connected with Alida annoyed him, and it afforded her satisfaction, as they cantered down a lane which diverged slightly from the line of chase, but was a safer course.

"There is no need of haste," Clinton observed; "the fox is circling, we may be equally—" The sentence was not completed; his eye had swept the field for Alida's sorrel, which, with extended neck and ears set back, was rushing close to a fence, on the jagged projections of which the girl's skirt was being torn.

The road in which his party cantered was bordered by a worn fence which, with trees and shrubbery, formed an impassable barrier. To have followed the lane would have consumed valuable time; to have taken

down the rails might have been attended with fatal delay; one possible opening presented, where a rail was off, but the fence high even then, and a few feet above an apple tree stretched its branch; toward this opening Clinton directed his steed at a run. The spectators paused aghast as the horse made the leap, while the rider stretched himself along its flank, and both disappeared behind the brush, and then were seen darting across the field. Passing Emmart, they doubled on the sorrel, which, hearing a tread, leaped more wildly. This availed nothing, for Ranger, partaking of his master's spirit, stretched out as he had never done before. Soon they were neck and neck, and a strong hand grasped the bridle of the runaway with a vigorous jerk the jaw hold on the bit was broken, and Clinton quickly dismounted, exultant that the vicious beast had been so readily brought to a stand, and the danger over. "Come," he said, "I can no longer risk you on that horse," and the frightened girl dropped into his extended arms. "You shall take Ranger," he insisted; "you will find him reliable, and an old friend."

Alida's nerves had been tried, and she had looked pale; now a flush suffused her face as she exclaimed: "I deserved to be scolded, Mr. Clinton; your kindness is a keener rebuke."

"To scold might be a guardian's prerogative; we are comrades." She felt that his eye rested tenderly on her; and the charm of his accent thrilled her.

By this time the exchange of saddles was effected, and Emmart, dashing up, demanded: "What are you doing?"

"Swapping horses, which is in order even at a hunt," Clinton explained, appearing not to notice the other's curtness, and as he lifted Alida into the seat, she demurely said, lowering her voice: "I should like to go to Shandy Hall."

"I'll come for you this afternoon," he answered in like subdued tone. "Now go enjoy yourself; Ranger will bring you in at the brush."

"What were you two whispering?" Emmart demanded as they rode on. What a contrast this petulant tone to the gentle voice of him who had styled himself her "comrade;" especially as her thoughts were just then reverting to the dawn of that comradeship when first she had been mounted on the chestnut; and with spirit she replied: "I might hesitate to answer were your question respectfully put, but as it is, most decidedly I have only the reply that what we said is no affair of yours."

"Grason is an impertinent fellow," Emmart snapped.

"Courage might redeem the rudeness were you to say that to him."

Emmart winced, but continued: "I am surprised that you put up with that man's meddling. What right had he to exchange horses?"

"Quite as much, Mr. Harvey, as you have to lecture me; and we will part company if you continue to forget yourself." Her quickened pace convinced Emmart of her earnestness, and he inwardly fumed.

As Clinton had predicted, Reynard was making a circuit to reach his den; with tongue protruding and drooping brush, his labored canter showed that the race was nearly run; it had been a brave one, and only a few of the huntsmen had been able to keep up.

Alida and her companion, though they had lost in time, compensated by following the inside of the circle and came in, just as the leading hound turned over Sir Reynard; even then the poor fellow made battle, but the dogs crowded up. It had been a fair field, and they considered it a free fight, and soon finished him.

Lord Kilray was nearest the hounds, and securing

the brush, gallantly presented it to Alida. "I need no formal introduction," he said; "your splendid mount associates you with my good friend; but where is Grason?"

"Here, my lord, in time to congratulate you," the individual referred to exclaimed, as he cantered up.

The frolic over, the huntsmen scattered on their several ways. With Emmart, to physical fatigue was added gloom, for the events of the morning foreshadowed discomfiture. His depression proved contagious, for melancholy, like measles, may spread and become an epidemic of hatred, insanity, or suicide; fear may cause a panic, and those whose nerves have been of steel will flee at "airy nothing;" emotional chords will transmit their harmony or discord. Consequently, the other members of his party rode in moody silence.

Alida's mind, reverting to the late exciting incidents, recalled painfully the petulance that the tenderness of her truest friend had rebuked.

Helen's feelings also were out of tune; for her the hunt had proved a fiasco; she had experienced a fatiguing ride, and had no "brush" to show for it.

Emmart's irritability increased with his reflections. "That cursed horse!" he thought, "like the romp at the party, and the skating lesson, has played right into his hand."

"Why could not you hold that sorrel?" he questioned; "I would not have gotten him, but that I thought you a rider."

"You owe him no explanation," Helen interrupted; "on the contrary, he should excuse himself," she rebuked, "for subjecting you to the danger;" and she directed toward her brother a significant look.

The canter home of the Hall party was not of like gloom. Merryfield glowingly rehearsed the episode of

the runaway, and at the old lord's exclamations Clinton was spared a blush, being with Edith, out of earshot.

"I notice," that fair observer remarked, "that your spirits have revived; such melancholy sat on you this morning, I by no means felt sure of your joining us."

"My moods are not worth noting," he rejoined.

"Evidently they are transient," she persisted; "your spirited dash revived you. Why did not you bear off the prize?" and she glanced at him keenly.

"Ah," Clinton sighed, "woman has her wilful way."

"Yes, and

" 'We strive to check (her) mad career,
But strive in vain!'

Is that it?" Again searchingly she watched him. "So you wanted her to join you?"

"Would you expect her to prefer my sedate society to the company she is in?" he answered.

"The hold is lost," Edith triumphantly reflected.

"Brother," Leila said, as at the door he assisted her to dismount, "I thought by that splendid chance this morning you would have won back the wayward girl. Your failure shakes my faith in your influence."

A smile accompanied by an elevation of the shoulders, which might mean anything, was Clinton's only response.

CHAPTER XX.

THE HIDDEN TOKEN.

As the Harvey lunch party withdrew from the board, a servant informed Alida that Mr. Grason's man wished to see her. Repairing to the hall, she found Walter, who announced that "Master Clinton sent word he'd be along to take you to the Hall in time for dinner, an' he say hyar am a pa'cel which comed as usual."

Alida recognized her guardian's writing, and eagerly unwrapped the package, disclosing a unique bracelet, accompanied by the lines:

"Let this circle of gold your wrist entwine,
It holds a hidden token,
And never once from its place resign,
Until the secret's spoken."

She deposited this enigmatical note in her bosom, and dismissing Walter with the answer that she would be ready, hastened to the parlor to acquaint Mrs. Harvey with her anticipated departure.

"Surely you will not leave so soon!" exclaimed the hostess.

"I have been with you half the holiday," Alida responded. "I must be some with Leila; Mr. Grason will come for me."

"You made that appointment this morning," Emmart asserted.

"Yes," Alida rejoined, gazing at him; "the meeting Mr. Clinton reminded me of my duty."

Within an hour, as the buggy was bearing away the late guest, Emmart remarked to his sister: "It's odd she never thought of duty until Grason's return."

"Brother," remonstrated Helen, "scolding will not win a girl like Alida. Do not be deceived by her forbearance; it is more serious than temper. I do not blame her for going, after your rudeness of to-day. You do not appreciate her, and have counted on conquest prematurely. The pony and poetry were novelties; you were indebted to them for her society; she is now advancing into noble womanhood, and from her high level is measuring you at your merit. I saw it in her quiet look this morning. She will not ruffle her temper about you."

"Your candor is touching," responded her brother; "but mark me! if I miss the girl—Grason shall smart for it! He has the third time crossed my path, and he'll hear from me, unless he runs off to Europe again on a night's notice."

"Brother, let Mr. Grason alone; you are rash, he is cool. You are in the wrong, he in the right; every advantage is on his side. Let him alone!"

During this admonition, its subject was going at a rattling rate over a frosty pike.

"It was more of an honor than I deserved, Mr. Clinton," Alida remarked, "to have you come for me; I had only expected you to send."

"And had my messenger denied by Mr. Harvey. I wanted you, therefore I came."

"It is kind of you to want me; your doing so relieves my mind of a weight. Miss Edith intimated that I had done something to drive you away."

No quiver of voice betrayed the keen twinge in Clinton's breast, as he replied: "The abrupt departure was my erratic manner. When you know me, you will understand it."

Her eloquent eyes looked into his, as she asked: "Do I not know you? I thought I did, for I have seen you tried."

"To some extent, Alida; but the mysteries of the heart, who may know?"

A sigh of sympathy escaped her. "Poor fellow!" she reflected, "he is thinking of some high-born lady across the water, who has not the soul to appreciate him!" and with feminine adroitness, she thus sought to divert him: "You cannot guess what a beautiful present I have received!" and she displayed the bracelet. "My guardian never forgets me, and my sorrow is that he does not come near that I might throw my arms about him and express my gratitude for all his kindness."

There was a new light gleamed in Clinton's eye, and perhaps it was well that she did not observe it, for the revelation of his soul was written there. She was searching for the verse, and producing it, she said: "There is a hidden treasure about this bracelet;" and she read the lines.

"The gift evidently holds a secret," he replied; "perhaps connected with your history; preserve it."

By this time their quick steppers had brought them to the Hall. Leila received them at the door, and interchanged significant glances with her brother, the one of surprise, the other of triumph.

As Alida entered the parlor Lord Kilray exclaimed: "Ah! my little friend of the hunt, so Grason has hunted you up!" and seizing her hand, he held her for a deliberate inspection, then added: "Well, I don't wonder! though I never before knew the recluse fellow to go after a girl."

"We are old com—I should say—old friends," replied Alida confusedly, a blush suffusing her face.

The surprised Edith and Mr. Merryfield occupied a bay window: the former, as she overheard Lord Kilray's remark, inquired: "Is the criticism correct of my curious cousin? You have seen him abroad."

"I believe," Merryfield answered, "he is the same in all places, and at all times. He fits in admirably at a party, for he entertains the wallflowers that otherwise might starve at a banquet; and then, jumping to the other extreme, will entertain some simpering miss. Awhile ago I thought that a lovely English girl had won him, as she came to America and he followed; but in a little more than a month he was back, and had not been near her. As he resisted *her* charms, any lady who expends fascinations on him will be wasting her time. Miss Lucett, I suppose, is a schoolgirl?"

"Yes, one of Leila's companions."

"The old story! not advanced enough to be dangerous; a few years later, and she may not boast of a ride with Grason."

Notwithstanding this, Edith had faith in her own powers; they were not to be measured by the capacities of an unfledged English girl.

A summons to dinner broke up the *tête-à-tête*. The fox hunt was animately described, and the elder Grason so departed from his wonted gravity that Leila exclaimed: "If there was to be another hunt, I believe papa would go."

"Perhaps I should," he answered, "with Lord Kilray for company."

"Could you perform such a feat of horsemanship as your son accomplished?" Randolph asked. "I have never known but one other rider so daring—he was Turner Ashby; the only difference being that Turner was after the fox, and—" Here Merryfield laughingly interrupted: "Grason was after the girl."

"He got her," added the old lord, while his eye twinkled, "and he'll show poor taste if he does not keep her."

"Your nerves must have been sorely tried?" Mrs. Grason remarked, by way of relieving the girl's confusion.

"Yes, but it was all my own fault," she responded; "I would ride that horse."

"That does not excuse Harvey," remarked the elder Grason. "He went out of his way to accomplish the mischief; he knew the disposition of that horse."

As the ladies retired to the parlor, Edith exclaimed: "My dear Alida, where did you get that queer bracelet?" and she critically examined it.

"It was my guardian's present," responded Alida; "this verse came with it," and she showed the slip of paper.

"You've certainly a weakness for finery!" replied Edith. "Have I ever seen you that you had not a gold cross attached to a chain about your neck? Yes! there it is; where did that come from?"

"It is not as an ornament I wear it," Alida responded; "it is usually concealed from the eyes of the curious."

"Ah! there's another of your mysteries, and you seem to be a mystery yourself."

"Since I have that reputation, I will maintain it," laughed Alida; "at least I'll be mistress of my counsels."

She was amused at Edith's inquisitiveness, and to aggravate it she added: "There is but one person who knows *all* about that cross; for his sake I wear it."

From further inquiry she took refuge at the piano, and touching the keys, sang "Kathleen Mavourneen." The clear notes floated to the dining room, and arrested

the uplifted glass while the ear was drinking in a richer draught. Not a syllable was uttered until the song died out; then Lord Kilray, preparing for a break to the parlor, exclaimed: "By all the powers! what is that?"

"Our little nightingale that Clinton has brought," responded the elder Grason.

"I do not wonder at his going for her!" Merryfield declared.

The wine no longer won them, and to Alida's confusion, the gentlemen, trooping into the parlor, gathered around the instrument, and the old lord remarked: "Come, my dear! do not smother that sweet voice; give the old man a pleasure such as he has not realized since Patti charmed him."

"Ah!" Clinton thought, "they begin to prize the gem I rescued from the dark recesses of the mountain. And that voice might have been hushed to-day but for my guiding hand."

He was looking over the music. "There is something," he said, "that will please Lord Kilray."

She was ready to do all he asked, and her voice rang out with the soul-stirring words of "Erin! Oh, Erin!" The rendition set the old lord wild with enthusiasm; she tamed him down with "Kate Karney," and set him laughing over the "Irish Washerwoman;" then she vacated the stool.

Edith in response to solicitations, assumed the seat but not the rôle of the late performer; her efforts were only instrumental.

Later on a whist party was proposed, in which Lord Kilray and the elder Grason were partners, against Randolph and Leila; while Edith and Merryfield sought the billiard room. Clinton, finding no one to entertain, sauntered to the library and picked up the evening

paper. A rustle attracted his attention, and discovering Alida in a corner, he asked: "What are you doing?"

"Looking over these engravings, sir."

"Come here, and I will explain them."

She placed the folio on his lap, and kneeling beside him, artless and beautiful, Clinton laid his hand upon her own. "Alida," he said, "never let me hear you call me 'sir;' mutual obligations for a life unite us closely and upon the level of comrades."

"I know," she answered, "though I cannot explain it, that I am within the reserve that so impresses others; but what would your family think were I to act toward you with the freedom that I actually feel?"

"No matter what they think!" he exclaimed vehemently. His longing look startled her. "Am I to be cut off from all I?"—commanding his agitation, he continued calmly—"lest I be considered eccentric? Am I to walk lonely through the world, because of its conventionalities? Oh, that one being would act naturally to me!"

His sorrowful look reminded Alida of an expression that she had before noticed. "Are you lonely?" she asked; she was thinking of the unfeeling woman across the water who she imagined had made him sorrowful, and her eyes were gemmed with tears of sympathy as she added: "You shall not be so if I can help it." Her hand was laid upon him; it was the first womanly touch, and the effort that controlled him was almost superhuman.

"We are forgetting the engravings," at last he said; "to review them will revive old journeyings."

"Let me ask you first to lock this bracelet," she requested, "and you keep the key."

As Clinton did so they were very close; his locks mingled with her tresses. The billiard room was to

the rear of the library, and through a doorway Edith caught glimpses of another puzzling pantomime. "She is down upon her knees, at Mr. Grason's side; they are in close conference. By heaven! her hand is on his shoulder—what can they mean by that look? What are they bending over? Their heads are actually in contact! The man, dignified with every one else, has no reserve toward her! What does it mean?"

These furtive glances caused Edith to play badly; and vain were Mr. Merryfield's efforts to give her the game.

"You have not your usual skill," he remarked.

"One loses interest where they cannot win," she answered. "You play so well, that really I have no show. Let us go to the library;" with this remark she led the way, and her catlike tread was close upon its occupants ere they were aware of her presence.

A photograph of the Grindelwald Glacier lay before them. Clinton was explaining the formations of those mighty ice rivers, after the fashion of his lecture in the cabin; though the surroundings were different, and the girl had grown almost to the woman, yet the same earnest eyes were gazing into his. It was a pretty picture that Edith thus broke upon.

"So you are having a *tête-à-tête*," she exclaimed.

"Oh, Miss Edith!" cried Alida, "have you been to Switzerland?"

"I hope to go some day."

"Well, listen to Mr. Clinton, and you will imagine yourself there now."

"Shall I have to get upon my knees to him to play the pupil?"

"We will place the folio on the table," quietly remarked Clinton, "and if my descriptions prove at fault, Merryfield will correct; he, too, has had the alpenstock in hand."

In the solitude of his chamber that night Clinton reflected: "She feels the freedom of our comradeship; that is all; and yet, her gentle way was sorely trying! May a good God help me to perform my duty, and still be strong!"

CHAPTER XXI.

FROM FIGHT TO FROLIC.

ON the morning after the hunt the grounds of the Glen were robed in white, and the snow was steadily falling.

"What a splendid indoor day!" exclaimed the old lord; "how enjoyable is the household cheer, contrasted with the dreariness without."

"Has the hunt fatigued you, that you are glad of repose?" Clinton asked.

"Not at all! I am used to the saddle. By the way, how well some of the ladies sat their horses; that Miss Lucett especially; she rode up at the close with the dignified bearing of an English lady. She comes of such stock, I'll warrant! There is decided character in her charming face."

"I imagine," Randolph interrupted, "that her 'dignified bearing' was but the shadow of an anger cloud. Sister has told me that the girl's temper is quick. Her look, in connection with Harvey's discontented visage, betokened a lover's quarrel."

"That may be," Lord Kilray replied. "I can imagine that she is spirited, but there's the manner of a lady for all that, and a soft light in her eye that tells of tender sentiment. Were I a friend of her admirer I would advise him not to tax her temper; a heart like her's must be won by gentleness."

"You are a shrewd observer," remarked Merryfield.

"I have long been a loafer in society," responded Lord Kilray; "being deliberate, and disinterested, I am not often deceived. When Grason handed her the music, I noticed something in her glance that might have been worth much to one who could hold the key to its interpretation."

"I am glad that you are pleased with her," Clinton remarked; "she is Leila's *protégé*."

Just then, Walter entering, announced that a gentleman wished to see Mr. Grason. The host, excusing himself to the guests, repaired to the library, where he found a seedily-dressed individual, with small, restless eyes and rubicund nose.

"My name is Noland," said the stranger. "I suppose I am addressing Mr. Clinton Grason?"

"Yes."

"Then I have the honor of handing you this," and he delivered a letter.

Clinton, opening it, read as follows:

"BURK'S TAVERN, December —.

"MR. CLINTON GRASON.

"SIR: You have with studied affront intermeddled in my relations to Miss Lucett, a lady in whose affairs you are interfering, and therefore, to rid her of annoyance, as well as on my own account, I demand satisfaction.

"Should you decline to meet me, I will denounce you as a coward, and shoot you as a dog.

"EMMART HARVEY."

Clinton replied at once:

"THE GLEN, December —.

"MR. EMMART HARVEY.

"SIR: Your note of to-day is received. The accusations therein contained have foundation only in your distempered brain. They afford no reason why I should

attempt to take your life or jeopardize my own. I therefore decline your challenge.

"CLINTON GRASON."

"Shall I not have the pleasure of conferring with a friend of your own?" asked the messenger, as he received the note. "I rather enjoy such affairs; the weather cannot dampen my ardor in arranging things convenient to the principals."

"It were well if your own *principles*, sir," Clinton rejoined, "were more in keeping with the civilized age than to seek the solution of trivial difficulties by the blotting out of human lives, which only establishes the folly of the combatants. The note explains."

"What he said sounded like a back down," Noland thought, as he rode away, "but he didn't look it. Most people turn pale or red, on receiving a challenge, but that fellow neither changed color nor twitched a muscle. Such men are dangerous."

When Clinton rejoined his guests Lord Kilray asked: "Do you often have such tempests as this?"

"No more than enough to afford variety of season, and for a few weeks the novelty of skating and sleighing. We think that we enjoy the finest climate on the continent. We have neither the long winters of the North, where seed time and harvest are so short that the farmer has scarce time to grow or gather what will keep him from starving, nor the debilitating summers of the South, with flies, fleas, and fevers. Nor do we burrow from the Western blizzards. Our varied seasons are each beautiful, and a new one advances ere we tire of the last. I predict fine weather for to-morrow, and a chance for rabbits."

The social demands upon the host diverted him from thoughts of the Comrade, whose touch had tried his

resolution. Nor had he time to dwell upon the nature of the challenge; but in that dead of night which has been styled "the noon of thought" visions of the fair and dark commingled. "Lord Kilray is correct!" he reflected, "her graceful form, her lovely face, her spirit, all proclaim her 'to the manner born.' " He reflected upon the words of the note: "'Shoot you as a dog!' He is equal to it—suppose he should? Her guardian gone, what would become of her? Victim of the profligate? Never! I will live and fulfill my undertaking; her fate depends upon my own. Thus far at least the threads of our destiny seem interwoven."

The following day gave promise of sport. The English gentlemen equipped for hunting and Randolph for departure.

The sportsmen, accompanied by beagle hounds, found the rabbit tracks numerous, and the hunt became exciting to the guests, but no shot was offered Clinton, who, calling a dog, diverged from the party. His beagle soon started a Mollie cottontail, and a load of shot overtook her. Again the dog barked as if at bay, and presently a figure emerged from the bushes bordering a ravine, and Emmart Harvey faced him. "You are out hunting!" he said; "so am I," and he raised his pistol; several drinks had fortified courage but unbalanced judgment as to his antagonist. Clinton calculating chances, bounded forward and closed with the would-be assassin, who, being disconcerted, fired at random; a struggle ensued for the weapon. Harvey's effort being concentrated on the endeavor to fire, Clinton secured advantage in hold, and though the pistol was again harmlessly discharged, it was soon in the hand of the latter, who sent it whirling into the thicket.

The bout ended, the antagonists warily watched each other while recovering breath, for the struggle had been sharp.

"Now we are on equal terms," Clinton stated.

"Yes, d——n you! if you prefer strangling," the ruffian snarled as he rushed forward, but, reckless of his guard, met a stunning blow. Clinton availed himself of the opportunity to jerk off his shooting jacket, for which there was scarce time, for his adversary advanced furiously to close, that superior weight might have advantage, but science prevailed, and Emmart's head got in chancery. "Have you enough?" Clinton asked when, having demonstrated the helplessness of his antagonist, he released him.

"No, d——n you! You don't back down now, you've got to fight."

"Then I'll not spare you next time."

The answer was the usual precipitate onset; it was met warily, and a determination about Clinton's face forbode danger. Soon a blinding blow with the left caught Emmart between the eyes; while the stars which it occasioned were still flashing, a powerful blow under the jaw fairly lifted him off his feet, and he rolled headlong into the ravine.

"I warn you not to associate the name of Miss Lucett with this affair," said Clinton; "if you do I will punish you again." He then turned away, and donning his jacket, concealed the spots that marked the chancery portion of the fight, and moved off with a view of sending assistance. He soon encountered the bearer of the challenge. "Ah, Mr. Noland," he said, "I was about informing Mr. Harvey's people of an accident that has befallen him in yonder ravine."

"Bless my life! I was looking for the fellow," Noland answered.

"Then I feel relieved that he will be in your hands," responded Clinton. "Good-morning!"

Noland watched the retreating figure, and mused:

"That bull-headed Harvey was spoiling for a fight; he had a notion, just because the chap wouldn't meet him, that it was to be a walk-over. I said there was fight in him. I must hurry on."

Reaching the spot where the trodden snow and blood gave evidence of the encounter, he saw the figure of a battered mortal painfully crawling out of the ravine.

"Why, Harvey, old boy, how came you so?"

"Quit your infernal nonsense!" growled the other; "help me out. I had a couple of drinks aboard, and tumbled into the cursed ditch."

"How about this blood on the bank? No matter, I'll swear to your lie; but you'd better increase the number of drinks—nobody would believe that only two could serve you that way. Come, let me help you."

Meanwhile Clinton neared his friends. "What luck?" exclaimed both.

"One," he answered, displaying the game.

"But we heard three shots?"

"They missed. Come," continued Clinton, "by the time we circle back to the Glen, lunch will be ready."

"And we ready for it!" exclaimed Lord Kilray, "to have out-shot you gives one an appetite."

Clinton, on reaching home, hastened to his chamber to remove traces of the encounter, but though he could be rid of the stained garments, it was not easy to shuffle off the ruffled spirits. The idea of a brutal fisticuff was revolting; yet how was it to have been avoided? He felt depressed, and the guests observing it, Mr. Merryfield exclaimed: "I really believe, Grason, that you are sore about the shooting. Cheer up! you had no chance."

Clinton was satisfied to have this construction put upon his gloom, and he answered: "I feel restless; what say you to our taking the Hall ladies for a sleigh ride, and after dining with them, go to the club?"

"Anything, dear fellow," the jolly lord exclaimed. "I should enjoy seeing our musical charmer, and an evening at the club would be delightful."

"Then we will start at once," exclaimed Clinton.

While the Glen gentlemen made the most of the wintry weather time dragged heavily with the ladies at the Hall. But when the rabbit hunt was in progress, Edith, too, was on a hunt, though of a different nature. The library pantomime rankled; and she weaved as complex a web as that upon which her crochet needle was engaged.

"Alida," she said at last, "how happened it that you came here? We understood that you were to be at the Harveys."

"I changed my mind."

"What changed it?"

"My fancy."

"Your fancy?"

"Yes, and if you undertake to fathom every fancy that a girl may have, you will be kept busy."

"There is a refreshing candor about you!"

"Well," Alida responded, "lest you should attach an importance to something of no moment, I can only say that I thought it my duty to come."

"Most exemplary! and how it times with Cousin Clinton's return; he told you to come."

Alida searchingly glanced at her companion as she replied: "Mr. Grason does not dictate to me."

"You are wonderfully innocent! Handsome presents may command. A golden band holds you now."

"It is no such thing!"

"You wear his bracelet, and he penned the lines that came with it."

"As I told you, the gift is from my guardian. How could the verses be Mr. Clinton's? Besides, he is aware

that I am not allowed to receive presents. He would not offer one."

"You have dangerous faith in him; he is known as an oddity."

"He does not display it to me."

"You are too odd yourself to see it," Edith retorted. "Society would pronounce it odd for a gentleman of Mr. Grason's reputation as a woman-hater to be showing attention to a schoolgirl."

"I grant my own shortcomings," Alida acknowledged, "but my ways bear no comparison to those of Mr. Grason."

"A disinterested person would have thought that your ways were running in the same odd groove, the other night, in the library; such familiarity on your part would only be excusable upon the plea of verdancy. Were you to behave in that way with Mr. Harvey he would meet your imprudence with perilous approaches."

"Were Mr. Harvey to attempt a liberty I should box his ears," Alida threatened, her eye flashing.

"And yet Mr. Grason does. Has he ventured a familiarity with me, even considering kinship? Yet he does with you. He knows the difference between the woman of the world and the schoolgirl."

Alida's face turned crimson. "I would not have supposed," she said, "that you could attribute improper motives to Mr. Clinton; nor did I think you would be so uncharitable to me. I have felt free with him because it is he who has helped me out of all my troubles. At the party, when I behaved rudely, he smoothed it over—when I met with the skating accident, he brought me home—in the runaway at the hunt, his arm saved me, and he would have even prevented the catastrophe but for my own perverseness. He has taught me to regard him as a brother: it is not in my nature to repay

this kindness with the reserve that others show him. His heart is yearning for more. I will extend to him the sympathy he craves. Society may think what it pleases."

Her earnestness disturbed Edith. "His protecting arms are ever around you," she retorted; "such loving experiences have not happened with others. I believe that were his dark mustache to veil your tempting lips, you would take it—of course, in a *sisterly* way."

"Your remark proves how little you know either of us."

"Hi, my lady! whence comes your assurance? You had better not trust him."

"No one as yet has taken such a liberty, and the nearest approach to it is your unsolicited admonition."

"Well, I will not further try your patience; only don't make fish of one and fowl of another, or the favorite lark may play with your confiding innocence, then drop you to the fish, to be drowned in a sea of sorrow."

At this moment, Leila rushed in, exclaiming: "They are coming! all coming in the big sleigh."

"Who?" Edith questioned, and darted to the window. "Sure enough! my charming Merryfield, the old lord, and Mr. Clinton."

Alida, to show her own indifference, rattled off an accompaniment, and commenced to sing: "The Campbells are coming!" Lord Kilray entering, caught the words:

"The great Argyle he comes before—"

His eye twinkled, and he exclaimed: "Is that me, my dear? You are a darling, always to be playing my favorites."

"Excuse her, my lord," Clinton interrupted, "time is short." Nodding to Alida, he added: "Hurry and get ready for a sleigh ride."

Lord Kilray took Alida under his especial charge, Leila occupied the third seat behind, the fourth, and only remaining one, being reserved for Edith. Mr. Merryfield extended a hand to assist her to it. "No," she insisted, "a gentleman and lady sit together, I'll ride in front."

"You'll be facing the wind," argued Merryfield.

"It is only bracing," she contended.

"Hurry! the horses are restless," Clinton exclaimed; and assisting the determined girl to the front, he mounted beside her, and off they glided with a lively jingle.

"Whither bound?" Merryfield inquired, as they darted through the gateway.

"Anywhere, after excitement!" Clinton curtly responded.

"I fear it will be after breaking our necks, if we continue at this pace," said Lord Kilray; for they were going recklessly down grade, on the verge of a dangerous gully. The driver, regardless of remonstrance, flourished his whip over the backs of the leaders; they responded by a bound, and the old gentleman shuddered as he added: "It does not much matter about my old bones, but there are young folks who are entitled to a longer lease on life."

Just then the sleigh tilted as it rounded a curve. Leila screamed, and Edith, in terror, grasped Clinton. All were thoroughly scared, except Alida; to her, the swaying motion and the wind were exhilarating.

Edith's clutching attracted Clinton's attention to the panic, and he drew in the foaming steeds as suddenly as he had let them out.

"It was just one of his freaks," thought Merryfield.

"He did it to scare me," reflected Edith, angry with herself for displaying temerity. "It was glorious!" she said; "you were just making up for lost time which my tardiness occasioned."

"Sleighing must possess the charm of novelty to you," responded Clinton; "I am glad you enjoy it."

"Oh! I've had a delightful time, and my enjoyment is enhanced by surprise at your return. Perhaps you did not know of it yourself, until just before sailing?"

"Are my actions so haphazard?" Clinton asked.

"Like your driving. Discretion's rein relaxes, and a wild spirit makes away with you."

"The horses were under control," he answered; "may the reins of judgment be always as well in hand!"

Just then Lord Kilray asked: "What building is that to the left?"

"The knowledge box where our young ladies receive their educations," Clinton answered. "It is the convent."

While the rest were chatting Edith resumed in an undertone to Clinton: "You class Miss Lucett among *our* young ladies? *Who* is she, that she merits to be recognized as a social equal?"

"It does not concern me as to *who* she is, it is *what* she is. Her musical genius alone commands respect; see how the old lord is taken with her!"

"He is in his dotage; but, Cousin Clinton, somebody else is taken with that girl's fascinations. Your own attentions occasion remark."

"As my sister's guest she is entitled to civility from me. All know how little I court ladies' society."

"Therefore is it remarkable; besides, you flatter her vanity, you encourage aspirations that may set her wits to work: in girls of her class they are usually keen,

Who may tell the consequence? Those apparently indifferent to female fascinations are sometimes easiest entrapped."

Edith felt frightened at her own temerity, but the library episode had impelled her. She furtively glanced at her companion's face, but look betrayed no thought; therefore, she missed the flattery it would have afforded to know that her warning had recalled that of the priest; but the caution had grown familiar. Clinton had begun to consider the fall as inevitable, and to be reconciled.

"You have ascribed to Miss Alida the astuteness of a shrewd woman," he responded; "she is a confiding child, and clings to those who are kind to her, which explains the freedom from restraint toward myself. It is not likely that we shall often meet. You may spare your solicitude."

The explanation failed to satisfy Edith, but she dared not venture further.

"Are you two in front settling celestial problems?" the uneasy Merryfield asked.

"On the contrary," Clinton answered, "our appetites are reminding us of the terrestrial; we have made the turn, there is Shandy Hall."

"Ah, yes!" exclaimed Lord Kilray; "I'm thankful to get back! Just now, you not only took our appetites, but we had about concluded that we were done with dinners."

"Never mind," laughed Clinton; "here you are safe. May it always prove so with those who have confidence in me."

"He flatters Alida," Edith thought. "She's as wild as he, and evinced no fear at his freak."

"Ah, me!" she sighed, addressing Leila when the ladies retired to their room, "what's the use of fixing? If we were in town there would be the theater to go to.

Just to think! Jefferson is to play "Rip Van Winkle." Out here we are in a Rip-Van-Winkle sleep."

"It would be splendid to go!" cried Leila. "Can't we arrange?"

"Drop your brother a hint."

"At another time it might do, but now he has guests."

"Nonsense! let him take them along."

"No," replied Leila, "he was out of sorts this morning. I've never known him to be in such a mood; I could not venture to approach him, but he might not refuse you."

"Oh, yes, he would!" Edith declared. "Besides, I'm afraid of him; I cannot venture to 'bell the cat.' Alida's the one to try, and my word for it, she'll succeed."

"She will not undertake it," Leila contended. "She has some prudish notions, and is as determined as brother."

"They are matched, that's certain," Edith rejoined; "therefore she may manage him. Let us see what she says to it."

At dinner Clinton's taciturnity was remarked, especially by the plotters, who interchanged foreboding glances, but when the ladies retired from the table they approached Alida with the proposal. At the general prospect her eyes were dancing, but when her share in the attainment was suggested she shook her head, and asked: "Why would you put the task upon me? If you cannot accomplish it, what better prospect have I?"

"The best of all," Edith contended. "Brothers do not mind refusing sisters and cousins; besides, we are afraid. Your position is different; gallantry would forbid his denying you."

"I do not fancy being the one to test it."

"Well!" exclaimed Edith, "I suppose we must forego the fun, because you are afraid of him."

"As you think so," Alida observed, "I'll prove to you that you are mistaken. I will also prove to you that I *have* influence with him; more, perhaps, than some of his relatives."

The gentlemen, in contemplation of their club engagement, did not linger at the board. As they retired Alida intercepted Clinton at the library door: "I have something to ask of you," she said; "will you come in here?" and she led him to the armchair he had before occupied.

"What can she want?" he thought.

"Will you grant my request?" she urged, returning his inquiring gaze.

"Comrades usually concede to each other's wishes."

"The girls are anxious to go to the theater to-night, and have made me their petitioner."

"It will be a treat to *you*; of course I will!"

"I do not include myself: what would you and my guardian think of me? Not for all the theaters would I forfeit your good opinion. From a sister and cousin the request is allowable."

"Then why cannot they ask?"

"They think me something of a virago, and imagine that I can 'beard the lion in his den.' I feel a pride in succeeding; gratify my vanity by taking them."

"Were you ever at the theater?"

"No."

"Then go, enjoy the treat."

"Not at my own solicitation."

"Surely with *us* it makes no difference!"

"The guardian might not understand our intimacy. I will do nothing to forfeit his respect."

"I, too, value your independence, and would be the last to tempt you. You give me credit for candor?"

"You know I do!"

"When your guardian appreciates the disinterested nature of the request, he will not construe the acceptance of my invitation into a breach of propriety. Curb your pride, and afford me the gratification of giving you a theatrical treat, and of being identified with this first pleasurable impression. You will, too, gratify your own pride, and afford Leila and Edith the pleasure they anticipate: but without your company there will be no theatrical party."

"How like a spoiled boy he is!" Alida reflected. "As you ask me it must be right," she said. "I will go."

"Then tell the girls to get ready, and do not allow misgivings to mar your pleasure."

Alida still lingered; her look was troubled, and she faltered: "Miss Edith will not understand how I have succeeded, and will accuse me of forwardness."

"Let her!" Clinton snapped; he then added, gently stroking her hair, "our comradeship is dear to both of us, and is not for ordinary gaze."

The change of programme suited the gentlemen, who declared that the club would keep, and the ladies in pleasant anticipation hastened to prepare. As they did so, Edith inquired: "Alida, what on earth kept you? You must have had an awful time coaxing."

"You all dreaded to approach him," Alida answered; "I simply made

" 'Persuasion do the work of fear.' "

Without further satisfaction, she hastened to be ready, and was the first downstairs. The gentlemen were in waiting, and Clinton tossed her upon the front seat. "There," said he, "hold the reins." Leila next appeared, and was ensconced beside Lord Kilray; Edith came last, to find a place assigned her with Mr. Merryfield, to that gentleman's delight and her own chagrin.

The horses, remembering their dash of the morning, bounded off for a like mad race, and Lord Kilray, whose nerves were still unstrung, cried out: "Spare us! Spare us!"

"Do not be uneasy," Clinton assured him; "we are only making up lost time."

"They were frightened this morning," Alida remarked, *sotto voce*.

"You were not," Grason smiled.

"I have no experience with hysterics. Were you testing our courage?"

"It did not occur to me that I was exciting alarm. I felt an impulse to give the horses rein, a desire to get away from everything, even from myself."

"Not from a comrade?" she bewitchingly questioned. "Though she might but poorly comprehend your worries, she would soften your sorrows by her songs, and melt them by her music."

"There would be little chance for such a siren, as in the convent each sister would be a Cerberus to keep me from you."

"I suppose so," she sighed; "they have already reproved me for the association."

"How could that be?"

"Gossips enters even a convent."

"No one shall intermeddle with our friendship," Clinton exclaimed. The sternness of his tone thrilled a chord of sympathy in Alida, and for answer she interlocked her arm within his own. Just then they arrived at the brow of a hill overlooking the city, with long avenues bordered by lighted lamps. "Oh, how beautiful!" Alida exclaimed; "I have before seen just such rows of lights, but where?"

Her question recalled to Clinton's mind her former allusion to a similar scene, and her query as to whether

they were stars. His mind still dwelt upon the subject as they reached the theater.

When they were seated in the box, Lord Kilray exclaimed: "Miss Alida, your eyes are fairly dancing."

"This is my first visit to a theater," she declared; "it seems like a palace of the fairies."

"I would give one hundred pounds," he rejoined, "to have a certain fairy sing on that stage as she did in the parlor a few nights since. If I know anything of American audiences they would stand up and yell."

"What would the sisters do with her when she returned to school?" Alida blushing questioned.

"How can they know what goes on here?"

"They learn of my doings; if I drive out they are informed, and I'm called to account."

"The sisters are kind to her," Leila interrupted.

"Yes, they are; still I have to walk circumspectly, or be shut up again through vacation."

The curtain rose, and our theater novice became absorbed in *Rip's* career—Lord Kilray an interested observer of Alida's enthusiasm—Merryfield an inspector of the audience—and only one noted Clinton's compassionate look at Alida.

"I wonder what he is up to?" Edith thought as she saw him hand a note to a messenger boy, and she availed of the intermission to converse with him in an undertone.

"What sort of guardian can he be," she said, "who allows an excitable child, without fixed principles, to run about at her own free will?"

"I do not see that she runs about," he responded; "her visits are confined to a few schoolmates. Her guardian may look to her more closely than appears."

At the close of the next act, as they left the theater, Merryfield inquired: "Where's the sleigh?"

"We walk a block," Clinton said, and offering an arm to Edith, led the way to well known quarters for good cheer, and Merryfield, still looking for the sleigh, was ushered into a brilliantly lighted parlor.

"It is well to fortify the inner man before the homeward drive," exclaimed Clinton; "prepare for the attack; the landlord has filled 'the flowing bowl.' " He then conducted them to the adjoining room where a banquet was prepared.

"By all the powers!" exclaimed the elder guest. "Grason never does things by halves."

Edith and Leila expressed their pretty compliments, and Alida's mute surprise was enhanced by her being conducted to the head of the board.

"He honors her," Edith thought. "It was I who suggested the frolic."

"Yes," whispered conscience, "you made of her a cat's-paw," and justice added: "the cat has the biggest chestnuts."

Alida turned to Lord Kilray: "Please sit by me," she appealed, "and show me how I am to preside; it is all so new."

"Make yourself easy," replied the old gentleman; "you'll do well, it is born in you. But should anything go amiss we won't tell it out of school."

"We will become a secret society, and then it need not reach the dreaded convent," Edith remarked.

"No matter if it does," Alida rejoined; "it is Mr. Clinton's doings; I shall refer the sisters to him. He is able to fight my battles."

Clinton's face wore a curious expression; Edith remarked it, and exclaimed: "You are frowning as if you had a nightmare, and you look as you did in this morning's John Gilpin drive." In an undertone she added: "Tell me Alida's charm in coaxing you to exchange the club for the theater?"

"If you cannot understand your own sex," he responded, "how can I hope to explain their winning ways? If you need a lesson, study Alida now. See how this moment she fascinates our old friend into imagining himself rejuvenated; and you had best go to Merryfield's rescue—she's drawing him into her toils."

Sure enough! Alida was rattling away in her happiest mood; an inspiration had possessed her to merge the schoolgirl into the lady, for Clinton had complimented her and she had resolved to prove worthy of the position.

"Come!" said Lord Kilray, "as the wine circles, we must have a toast, a speech or a song."

"Agreed!" Clinton exclaimed, and glass in hand he improvised:

"We'll drink to Lord Kilray
Whose locks are turning gray,
And yet his heart beats ever light and gay—
He drives dull care away,
He brightens every day,
His memory green and dear will ever stay."

The old lord arose with parliamentary dignity, and replied: "My dear young friends, though the frosts of many winters have touched my brow, yet among our bright, innocent party, my heart feels youthful as ever it did—sorrows may bend the form, and cares may furrow the face, yet there is a part of us that is immortal, it need never grow old. Gather the blessings that bloom in your path; they will impart a fragrance to the inner life that fadeth not. The beautiful graces will brighten your faces, and keep you eternally young—but:

"I'm prosy enough, it is time to yield
The poet's palm, to Merryfield."

He resumed his seat amid applause, and for the next speaker the company looked to Merryfield, who, with poetry and pathos in his eye, addressed his fair inspirer:

"I'll pledge this goblet to Virginia's daughter,
Fairest flower of a grand old State;
And though I wander far across the water,
I'll think of her, whate'er may be my fate."

Edith blushed prettily; her tact grasped at a happy thought, and rising before a dreaded song could be proposed, replied with coquettish grace: "What more can I wish so pleasant a flatterer than that wine, wit, wisdom, wealth, and woman may never prove lacking in his earthly career!"

Laughter mingled with the clatter of glasses, as Clinton exclaimed: "Now, sister! it is your turn."

"Then," responded Leila as she waved her glass:

"We drink to her, whose flutelike note
Once heard, will still through memory float,
To wine, her song will zest impart,
Her matchless music thrill each heart."

"Yes, a song shall it be, my dear!" exclaimed the cheery lord; and filling his glass he added: "It will—

"Fling my heap of years away,
And I'll be wild, and young, and gay!"

Alida arose slowly, as if gaining time to gather ideas; all eyes were upon her—then, with rollicking roll of her graceful form, the left arm akimbo, and the right hand elevating the glass, and with a devil-may-care look, she sang:

"The glasses sparkle on the board,
The wine is ruby bright;
The reign of pleasure is restored,
Of ease and gay delight.
The day is gone, the night's our own,
Then let us feast the soul;
If any pain or care remain,
Why, drown it in the bowl,
Why, drown it in the bowl;
If any pain or care remain,
Why, drown it in the bowl.

"This world they say's a world of woe,
But that I do deny;
Can sorrow from the goblet flow?
Or pain from beauty's eye?
The wise are fools, with all their rules,
When they would joy control;
If life's a pain, I say again,
Let's drown it in the bowl.

'Time flies fast,' the poet sings;
Then surely it is wise
In rosy wine to dip his wings
And seize him as he flies.
This night is ours, then strew with flowers
The moments as they roll,
If any pain or care remain,
Why, drown it in the bowl."

The song created a sensation; it not only threw the old lord into raptures, created a pang of envy in Edith, and caused Clinton's face to relax into a smile of genuine delight: but the notes extended beyond the banquet board—they reached the bar, where a stout, coarse-looking man was pouring from a bottle a liberal drink. As his ear caught the sound, the motion was arrested. He listened intently; even the words, in the clear enunciation of the singer, were sufficiently distinct for him to catch the drift of the ballad. He thought no more

of the drink until the voice died away, then, accosting the bartender, he inquired: "What's going on upstairs?"

"It's a party just out of the theater."

"Who are they?"

"I only know Mr. Grason, who is giving the entertainment," was the response. "They say he is rich enough to have golden goblets, studded with diamonds, to drink champagne out of."

The stranger quaffed his own less costly beverage and retired. Presently the revelers appeared at the front door; they did not observe a man, with slouch hat drawn over his face, standing in the shadow of a tree, and intently watching them; especially Alida, who presented a vivid picture of comfort and happiness, as, enveloped in her sealskin, her bright face peeping from soft wraps, she sat perched upon the front seat. When the remainder of the party were ensconced, Clinton sprang beside her, and the impatient horses darted off.

"Whose rig is that?" the somber stranger asked, accosting the boy who had been holding the leaders.

"Mr. Grason's—and a gentleman he is!" the lad responded, at the same time tossing up a coin as glittering evidence.

"Alida, where did you come across those verses?" inquired Clinton (the tinkle of the bells prevented their voices being heard). "Who would have thought that a schoolgirl could have at command a song so racy!"

"You must feel thoroughly ashamed of me, Mr. Clinton; I learned it from the men who used to sing it in the old home. It had been almost forgotten—for to have revived it at the convent would have shocked the sisters; but when asked to sing just now, it flashed across my mind that Lord Kilray would enjoy it. I'm scared enough now; they will think it out of place for a schoolgirl."

"Never mind!" Clinton consoled. "Should they abuse you, come to me, who at least owe you a debt of gratitude. I have been feeling moody and mad to-day, but the cheer that your song has wrought is as great as would be that from fight to frolic."

CHAPTER XXII.

"THERE DAWNED A BRIGHT HOPE."

THE day had arrived upon which the girls anticipated returning to school. They were lingering at breakfast, when a letter was handed Alida, who, having perused it, exclaimed: "My guardian requires that I shall have my photograph taken for him before returning to school."

"He should have made his demand earlier," Leila protested. "There is no time now; we are due at the convent at 12 o'clock."

"And I'm due in town in half an hour," her father announced.

Alida looked wistfully at him as he prepared to leave, hoping that he would offer to take her; but he seemed so cold she dared not ask him, and her prospect of the visit vanished.

"Let your crusty old guardian wait," Edith observed. "He does not care to come near you."

"He is the power behind the throne," Alida exclaimed. "His wish must be regarded, no matter whose rules are broken." Like an imprisoned bird she sought the window, and gazed at the winter landscape. She saw Mr. Grason drive away, and she felt very like crying. Just then Mr. Clinton's cutter glided through the gateway. "It's all right!" she exclaimed, and clapped her hands.

"What?" Edith questioned.

"Going into town. Here comes Mr. Clinton; he'll take me."

"You seem very certain. He knows that you girls are about returning to school; perhaps he has called to say good-by; then suppose he should ask some one else to drive? You would feel cut. One never can know what he intends doing."

"I know he'll help me!"

"Good-morning!" Clinton exclaimed, entering at the instant. He had caught her last words and inquired: "Who will help you?"

"You," she answered shyly. "I have important business, and must go to the city."

"Is it very important?"

"It is, and I am prepared to brave the convent discipline. I will go if I have to walk."

"Nothing would afford you more pleasure than to turn tramp," Edith insinuated.

"Why are you so concerned?" Clinton asked, seating himself by Alida.

She detailed the purport of her letter, and added: "My guardian shall not be disobeyed; I must go to town."

"I would not be so anxious to present my picture to a gentleman," Edith remonstrated.

Alida, accustomed to such gratuitous suggestions, paid no heed to this one, but appealingly turned to Clinton and asked: "Will you take me?"

"Literally would I!" he thought. "I have no engagement," he answered; "we will make a day of it."

"Indeed you must not!" Leila interposed. "Alida will have to postpone this matter."

"No," Clinton decided. "We will go through with this business; the sisters will have to be patient."

As Alida bounded off for her wraps, Leila exclaimed: "Brother, you should have reverence for the sisters."

"At least you should not encourage disrespect in a pupil," Mrs. Grason added.

"The child is already pert," Edith affirmed; "you incite her to insubordination and to increased wildness. She will be beside herself."

Clinton patiently endured this combined feminine fire until the prize returned, when he lost no time in retreating with her.

"I declare!" Edith observed, as the sleigh vanished, "that girl's effrontery deserves the name of 'brass;' and Cousin Clinton is captivated by it to allow himself to be hauled about by a child."

"It is only artlessness," her aunt replied, "and it amuses Clinton. Were it coquetry he would leave her severely alone."

"Ah, aunt, you do not fathom that girl; the perfection of art is to appear artless."

"It is not art," Leila contended, "not even the art of music; for in her that gift is a subtle, refined, inexhaustible harmony."

"What was it then," Edith persisted, "that induced him to forego an engagement in order to take her to the theater? What was it that secured her the seat of honor at his banquet?"

"You may as well cease puzzling," her aunt rejoined; "no one has understood Clinton. But it is preposterous to suppose that Alida can seriously impress him."

"Clinton and that girl are interesting studies," Edith persisted; saying which she left the room. Passing Alida's chamber door she observed an open letter upon the dressing table, she seized it and retired. It proved to be the guardian's recent note.

As the cutter neared the city Alida chatted with the volubility of one enjoying the reaction from restraint to liberty.

"I have seen so little of the town, can we not walk to the photographer's?" she asked.

"Certainly! I said we would make a day of it. We'll tramp as much as you please."

The sleigh left at a stable, soon they were sightseeing. He first took her to the market; it was alive with purchasers. "Give me your hand," he said, "or we may be separated," and he led her through the avenues of meat, mounds of vegetables, pyramids of eggs, monuments of bread, and barricades of butter.

This vast food supply of a great city was an impressive sight to Alida, and the more enjoyable because her escort allowed her to linger. She was too busy with the novelties to note the satisfaction with which he regarded her. At last, having elbowed through the market, they strolled leisurely down a shopping street. Several of Clinton's acquaintances, as they raised their hats, smiled at the novel sight of his loitering with a lady.

"Who can she be?" inquired one.

"A schoolmate of Helen Harvey," responded his friend. "She seems on excellent terms with Grason; see, how she pulls him to that window; many a girl would give her eye teeth to be that familiar with the millionaire."

The sight of the pretty things inspired the desire to purchase. At first Clinton had proposed to do the paying, but Alida pushed aside the purse. "I have plenty of money," she said; "my guardian would not like it."

A smile played about the corner of Clinton's mouth.

As they passed a jeweler's Alida was again at the window. "Come in," said Clinton; "while my watch is being regulated, look about at the art collection." He stopped at the rear end of the counter while she passed on, and he rejoined her just as she had gotten through some trifling purchase.

"So you could not resist the temptation?" he said. "Well, no wonder! among these pretty things. Now for the picture! Like truants, we have loitered away the morning."

"You will stay with me, will you not, Mr. Clinton?" she asked. "You won't let them put me behind screens, out of sight? I should not know how to fix, and I want to look my best."

"I will be with you," he answered.

When her turn came he attended to every detail of the sittings; at last they were ended, and promising the photographer to return and examine the proofs they left.

Again on the street Alida inquired the time.

"It is 2 o'clock," he answered.

"Oh, Mr. Clinton! when will we get back? I feel frightened; you, too, are detained."

"Never mind about me; make the most of your closing holiday. Do not be uneasy; I'll arrange. And in the meantime we have two idle hours; let us put them to account by having lunch."

He conducted her to a cozy parlor in a ladies' fashionable dining saloon.

When Alida realized the profusion of the repast she exclaimed: "Oh, Mr. Clinton! this is too grand; it might do for the nobility that you have been entertaining."

"I am honoring a nobility above that of titles," he responded. "Do you remember the supper you spread for me in the cabin? In the enjoyment it afforded it was a richer feast than I have the power to repay."

"I often think of that meeting," Alida murmured, when they were served and the waiter had been dismissed. "Your good influence commenced then, and my fortune changed for the better."

"What would I not give," he exclaimed, "for your

photograph, as, with bare feet and tattered gown, you gracefully swung the milk pail, when I first met you."

"Your look more than your word induced me to let you stay," Alida resumed. "You possessed a silent will power; you exercised it when you presented the cross, and your look kindled the spark of ambition that has lighted me to better things. The other day you again used that subtle power, and I left the Harveys."

"It is a convenient faculty," laughed Clinton.

"I have noticed," Alida continued, "a smiliar influence over your home folks, especially Miss Edith."

"Somebody else must be accredited with the gift," Clinton rejoined. "How happened it that you were appointed petitioner for the theatrical visit? Why your certainty of coming to the city directly I was within reach?"

"How do you know?" Alida questioned.

"Your eyes betrayed you."

"I took advanatge of our comradeship."

"Never allow that comradeship to be interrupted," responded Clinton. "The comrade fills what would have been a dreary void."

A certain quiver in the tone more than the words startled Alida. "Is it poor me?" she conjectured. "I thought he yearned for a lady across the water." At the suspicion her heart bounded. "No, it is not possible! he is only pleased; my company diverts him." Suppressing a sigh, she answered: "There is but one person who would feel concerned about my acquaintances; his views seem like your own, and I have no dread of arbitrary interference. Besides, he is always absent. As you are sometimes with me, and like a guardian in attention, I might imagine you the real one—it would be hard to let even him interrupt our relations. Not until you marry will any being come between you and the grateful mountain girl."

She assumed her favorite kneeling position by his side. Holding his hand, she placed a ring upon his finger. "Wear it," she said, "as the pledge of a comrade who has once been tried, and will ever be true."

The quiver of her voice communicated a thrill to Clinton's heart. "Be still!" he thought, "not yet; be patient till the work shall be fulfilled; then she may decide the sacred comradeship that only death shall sever." Leaning forward, his warm breath waved a curl upon her brow. Reverentially he pressed his lips beside it; then he raised her from the humble posture, and may his young blood be pardoned for the close and lingering pressure of her graceful form to his own, for it caused a crimson current to tinge to her temples. Releasing her, he said: "Gather your wraps, it is time to go;" there was a warning in the word as well as an admonition to depart, for he thought: "If we linger I shall whistle down the wind of folly all my good resolves."

By the time they were homeward bound, the shadows of the wintry eve were deepening into night. Alida observed this and exclaimed: "It will be so late when we reach the convent, what will they think?"

"No matter what they think," Clinton laughed. "We have had a good time."

"But it does matter; I may be punished."

"We will let the pony out, and soon be at Father Littig's," he encouraged. "The priest will fortify us with an 'open sesame;' do not be uneasy."

As they reached the suburbs he said: "Now for it!" and they sped like the wind, for the horse was of the Messenger and Joe Lane stock, and they soon reached the rectory.

"Come in and get warm," Clinton urged.

"No!" impatiently responded Alida; "I am not cold,

and there is no time." The darkness had closed in, and her alarm was momentarily increasing. Clinton almost immediately rejoined her, with the appalling intelligence that Father Littig was absent. He jumped into the sleigh, and turned the horse in the direction of the convent.

"Not there!" she cried. "I cannot go there without the excuse."

"I'll make it," Clinton consoled. "You shall not be delivered up as a lamb to the slaughter. Let's see what that *will* power amounts to; if it prevails with Mother Superior, I shall fancy that there is something in your theory. But here we are!" and they darted through the gateway.

The clangor of the bell sounded ominously in the still night. Clinton had only time to say: "Let me do the talking, don't be scared," when the door was opened, and he sent his card to Mother Superior. She soon appeared, and with a stateliness of manner that might have meant Christian asceticism, or an ominous calm, she bowed to Clinton, and surveying Alida, commanded: "You may retire, Miss Lucett; we will presently hear the explanation of this late arrival."

Alida was about to obey, but Clinton detained her, and with dignity no less than that of the Mother, he observed: "We are prepared to make that explanation now, and it will depend upon the manner in which you may be pleased to receive it as to whether I will resign Miss Alida to your charge."

"You presume upon unwarrantable authority!" the Superior reproved.

"I regret that you so regard it," Clinton answered. "Alida's guardian would be offended were she to be subjected to unjust punishment, and unless you will receive our explanation, I must continue my charge of

her until Father Littig, who can understand the case and the cause of detention, will aid me in making it satisfactory to you."

His manner, as well as words, impressed the Mother, and they surveyed each other as if in mutual measurement of character. The inspection proved a fortunate turning point. The Mother read in the young man's eye, as it looked into her own, a truth that commanded admiration. She saw by his firm mouth an unbending resolution, and she remarked his gentlemanly bearing.

Clinton, on the other hand, detected sympathy and benevolence behind official reserve; and he determined to penetrate its barriers and appeal to the *woman*. Drawing Alida to him, he continued: "Owing to peculiar circumstances, the only home which this child may claim is the convent; she refers to it with affection, and has not willingly disregarded its rules."

"We have felt attached to Alida," Mother Superior responded, "and have extended indulgence to her, but we did not presume that she would take advantage of our kindness."

"Nor has she," Clinton insisted; and finding the way open for a hearing, he detailed the nature of the guardian's commission, the photographer's delay (he did not dwell upon the shopping), and Father Littig's absence. Finally, he informed the Superior that it was only necessary for her to refer the matter to the priest to have his statement corroborated.

The Mother assured him she was convinced that further investigation was unnecessary, and turning to Alida, she added: "Now, my dear, you may retire and with a light heart. You are welcome home."

With gratitude that beamed in a brimming eye, Alida looked at Clinton, who seized her hand. "Be happy," he said. "Remember the pleasures of to-day."

She felt the pressure of her ring, that was on his finger; it seemed a link that united them.

As she vanished Clinton was about to depart, but the Mother detained him, as she remarked: "You can appreciate that we would be derelict did we not exercise a general supervision over pupils; during vacation visits rumors reached us, regarding Alida's conduct that caused solicitude." Her eyes were searchingly fixed on Clinton.

He met her gaze with equal earnestness, and responded: "Gossip, too often sullied by slander, may gain entrance to even your secluded home. To learn the facts about Alida you have only to apply to herself; for the predominant trait of her character is truthfulness, linked with purity. These are protected by a childlike innocence that has guarded her through a perilous past, and will shield her from such dangers as you are dreading." He had said enough; the Mother's questioning eye was on him, and with a rather abrupt "good-night" he withdrew.

For some time after he had gone the Superior's thoughts dwelt on the interview. "We must be cautious," she muttered, "how we credit outside communications. I doubt not that the young man has been maligned; yet it is a curious interest that he manifests. Father Littig must be put on his guard. Yet he spoke as one familiar with her mysterious past, and as one who, thinking deeply, has looked into her inner nature. His character is as interesting as her own."

Due to the excitements attending her return Alida was long composing herself to sleep that night. She recalled the unexpected incidents of her holiday, and as they trooped through her brain, by the light of Edith's sarcastic warning, how intimately were they connected with Mr. Clinton! His regard for her at the hunt, the

attraction to Shandy Hall, the library interview, the compliment at the supper, his kindness through the day just passed; these, in the aggregate, were a flood of revelation. Then the kiss! the kiss that still burned on her brow—and the folding of her form to his own—it was not marvelous:

“ There dawned a bright hope that she was not alone,
That the heart of another (was) warmed by her own.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

TO AND FRO.

By the physician's aid, nursing and nature, Harvey's battered body was mended; not his ways. The vestiges of morality that he had possessed seemed to have been knocked out of him, and he was becoming familiar with the face of vice. Since the encounter with Clinton he had been more than ever a loungee at the tavern; cultivating fruits of idleness, and over his grog indulging in maudlin sentimentalities. The rambles, rides, and readings with Alida were recalled, and culminated in vows of vengeance upon the one who had blighted his anticipations of love and lucre.

It was upon an occasion of unusual moodiness in the early spring that Noland, the congenial spirit who also shared his *spirits*, and therefore was not wont to leave him to languish, entered in company with a stranger.

"Harvey, old boy!" he said, "wake up! here is my friend, Mr. MacNeal. We have been comparing notes. He knows our nightingale, and has come on a long scent after the fox who caged her. You both wish to euchre him, one playing with hearts, the other with diamonds; unite your hands against the jack of clubs, and the trick is yours."

"What are you driving at?" exclaimed the young man; "quit your infernal riddles; speak out."

These birds of a feather then interchanged experiences, each bent on his own particular object.

Leaving the party to their three-handed game of mischief-hatching, let us return to Alida, whom we left in white-robed innocence, reviewing problems that caused her heart to flutter.

The sisters noticed with pleasure a charming gentleness in their gifted pupil, and her awakening religious interest was gratifying, especially to the priest; it was what he had contemplated; but the astute judge knew that its growth, to be permanent, must not be forced. He had waited the propitious moment, and then guided her by imperceptible gradations into the mysteries of his faith, while to her opening mind it all seemed true and beautiful and good.

His task was rendered lighter by appeals to emotional nature. The somber shadows, and the hush of the chapel, occasioned a divine tranquillity, human agitations seemed remote, she felt shut in from the world, and gentle peace brooded over her satisfied soul. The mysterious altar, and the mystical tapers, before which she kneeled, inspired a feeling as though she were in the immediate presence of a pitying God, whose tender eyes were gazing at her, and whose arms were outstretched to hold her to His sympathetic bosom. And when the choral anthem awoke harmonious to the organ's note, it seemed to her:

"The song of holy voices
Chanting o'er the crystal sea."

Thus the regard which had been entertained for her was enhanced by the spiritual interest for a ransomed soul.

On an evening in the early spring a gentleman called at the school, having a letter for Miss Lucett; it was conveyed to the Mother Superior, who summoned

Alida, and remarked as she delivered it: "The messenger awaits an answer."

Alida, with agitation, read as follows:

"AIKEN, S. C.

"DEAR ALIDA: I have sought this place, hoping to be restored from shattered health, regarding which I refrained from informing you as I desired to spare you uneasiness. But I grow worse, and must urge you to hasten to me.

"My trusty friend, Mr. Leftwich, will be your escort; as he is the reliable bearer of this letter. Excuse the writing—it is not that to which you have been accustomed; but the hand will soon forever lay aside the pen.

"That I may live to embrace you is the prayer of

"Your affectionate GUARDIAN."

Alida passed the letter to Mother Superior, and gave way to passionate grief.

"Compose yourself, my dear child," said the kind lady; "the illness may not be serious. I will question further."

As she entered the parlor a clerical-looking individual stood before her, whom even his friends would scarcely have recognized as Noland, so solemn was the cleanly shaven face, while the rubicund nose had been brought to a proper pallor by the powder-bag. He bowed deferentially, and the Superior inspected him with keen penetration, like the scrutiny with which she had surveyed Clinton.

"How is it that this communication does not reach us in the usual way?" she asked.

"With a view of avoiding delay," responded Noland, "I was instructed to report to Father Littig, but he is absent, so I ventured here, hoping that the letter may explain the seriousness of the errand, and hasten the young lady's departure."

"Is the gentleman considered so extremely ill?"

"The doctors say so, and his own anxiety for fear he may not live until his ward's coming aggravates his condition."

"She might, after all, arrive too late," the sister remarked.

"The old gentleman has a powerful will," contended Noland. "He will try hard to live until the young lady shall come, for there is something upon his mind concerning her. With your permission, I will have a carriage here in time for the morning train."

The sister suspected a mystery connected with Alida. The meeting might be of moment. She felt perplexed, and forgetting the rule, "when in doubt do nothing," she acquiesced to his plea.

Noland preserved a sanctimonious demeanor until out of the grounds, when he exultingly chuckled: "May the saints forgive me for the lies I told!" and he hastened to acquaint his companions with the result of the interview.

"As the old woman gives no trouble, the girl will be easily managed," Noland remarked. "We will have a bit of flirtation as we go along."

"She won't prove a fool like the old one," MacNeal admonished; "that gal's had her eye-teeth cut. Let her suspect you, and if she has not been mightily tamed, she'll make you wish you'd never seen her."

"She's got too innocent a looking face for that."

"Don't make an ass of yourself!" MacNeal again warned. "I know that gal, and if you try your nonsense while she's grievin' of her guardian, she'll prove troublesome."

"Do not disturb yourself," responded Noland, "I can manage the charming creature." They then concluded arrangements, and MacNeal departed by the evening train.

The moon had set, the sun had not arisen, when Alida started upon her sad mission. She could see nothing of her escort by which to determine what manner of companion he was likely to prove. But the voice has been styled the "organ of the soul," and his insinuating whine grated harshly on her ear. She needed the aid of no other sense to convince her of his vulgarity. To his officious questions she responded only in monosyllables. Fortunately, the ordeal of riding in the dark was brief, and they arrived at the depot with time to spare. By the aid of its lamps, her furtive glances observed his repulsive features, which in the hurry of toilet, he had omitted to disguise; the florid prominence told of the tavern, and in the exciting character of his mission the lawless eye darted with unwonted restlessness.

"Come into the coffee room," he proposed, "and have something to warm you. I reckon you had a cold breakfast at the school, but now, like a freed bird, your appetite should come to you," and he endeavored to lead her into the refreshment room.

"Thank you! not any," Alida responded. Leaving him to his own cup, flavored with disappointment, she paced the platform. At daylight came the cars; their company, if not companionship, was an improvement on the carriage, and though the monotonous landscape failed to interest, the face of even prosy nature was preferable to Noland's visage; and the desolate girl gazed out of the window.

To see but a portion of his companion's profile was not in the fellow's programme; his arm stole over the back of her seat, but only produced a slight change of Alida's position.

"I suppose you are troubled about your guardian?" he remarked.

"Yes."

"Well! he isn't very ill. He was scared when he wrote, and I, for fear that the domineering old creature at the convent would not agree to your coming, just hung out the mourning. The old gentleman will be a heap better when you get there."

Alida longed to inquire about her guardian's sickness, but she felt that this man must not be encouraged by a word.

Again he essayed: "You ought to be glad to have a nice trip." Still no reply, and he remained silent until the newsboy came along. He was about purchasing a daily, but just then Alida shifted her position, for her twisted neck had become tired, and he fell to perusing her face instead of the paper, and feeling encouraged, he thus resumed conversation: "There's nothing pretty about the country here; wait until you get near the mountains." The remark was accompanied by a covert leer; Alida caught its reflection in the mirror at the end of the car, and she became the more taciturn.

Again the ubiquitous boy passed, this time prepared to feast the body, as he sang out: "Oranges and apples!"

"Now!" thought Noland, "I'll wet her whistle; it may loosen her tongue," and he said: "What will it be, miss? By the way, here's candy; try the sweets."

"Nothing, thank you," she replied. He did not heed, but buying a few oranges he placed one of them in her lap. "By the powers!" he thought, as he noticed that it remained untouched, "I wish it was a lemon; I believe she would take that to add to her sourness." He commented aloud: "You are a remarkable young lady; you have neither the love of sweets nor the gift of gab."

"I know I am dull company, Mr. Leftwich," she replied, "but I'm troubled about my guardian."

"Never mind," Noland rejoined; "when you reach the old gentleman, you'll be lively enough." The leer was repeated.

For the third time the newsboy passed by; upon this occasion with books. Alida selected one, and delving in its pages saw no more of Mr. Leftwich until the conductor announced: "Twenty minutes for dinner."

"Now is the time to break the ice," thought Noland; "dinner will thaw her." She persistently refused to go with him, however, and he was too anxious for his own to consume the limited moments in endeavoring to make a woman will when she wouldn't; so he hurried off, muttering: "She'll be devilish hungry by supper time; starvation will bring her around. She's proving too tame; MacNeal was right, she don't flirt worth a cent; she'll wake up at the dropping-off place! The sick guardian!—Little Red Riding Hood will be nothing to it!"

After a good dinner and something to wash it down, he was still chuckling over the idea as he returned, and again endeavored to break the barrier, but his maudlin condition being apparent, she was the more impenetrable.

"Oh, that I was out of his charge!" she thought, "or that he was Mr. Clinton; I would have dined with *him*, or he would have brought me something; but this brute has no feeling." Anger was actually superseding dread, for hunger had arrived at that stage which makes one savage. There was no help for it; she again took refuge in her book, and the discouraged Noland retired to the smoker.

At dusk she laid the novel aside, and was meditating upon her doubtful future when the dreaded companion of her journey returned. He had been seeking consolation in a flask, and clumsily seating himself beside her,

his roving eye caught sight of the bracelet, and he seized her hand for its examination. Alida withdrew the imprisoned member, and to relieve the awkwardness, said: "It is from the old gentleman."

"Oh, the old gentleman! His taste surprises me; no doubt it surprises you. Well! he will surprise you more than that."

"What shall I do!" Alida thought. "How I wish I was out of this fix! and night coming on!"

Noland observed her distressed look. "Oh, you are hungry!" he exclaimed. "Well, it's about time; we will soon be at the place where the train stops for meals. I guess you'll get out then; you will have to; you must keep the bloom in your pretty cheeks."

It was not from disposition to yield to his authoritative words, for the wildcat was being aroused, but Alida had concluded that it would be wise to take supper, for to continue the journey with this man would require the possession of her faculties; it would not do to grow faint. She therefore nerved herself to face whatever might befall. Just then they heard the summons to supper, and, with Noland, she joined the throng moving toward the railroad hotel.

The north-bound train was on the siding, ready to start so soon as the one just in could give it the track. A passenger in the rear car was gazing at the arrivals. Suddenly he sprang from his seat and darted to the door. "Give me one moment!" he cried in passing, to the conductor, whose hand was already on the bell rope to signal for departure. Alida recognized the approaching figure, and a cry of relief escaped her as she extended her arms, and exclaimed: "Oh, Mr. Clinton! I am in so much trouble."

"Never mind," he interrupted, "tell me when we are on the train;" and was leading her away, as the

blunted sensibilities of the late escort awakened to the situation.

"Hold on!" he roared, "that lady is in my care; none of your intermeddling. I'm the wrong customer."

"I think you are," Clinton rejoined, as he continued to lead forward the clinging girl.

"Let her go, I say!" yelled Noland, at the same time intercepting him, and striking out with a show of pugilistic science.

Quick as lightning Clinton knocked up the arm, and seized the collar of the would-be escort; a jerk to one side, and a trip of the heels, rolled him helplessly off the platform. "Keep out of my path," the victor said, and continued to lead Alida to the train. The conductor assisted her to enter, as with a congratulatory smile he remarked to Clinton, "It didn't take quite a minute, sir." His hand was again on the rope and the train pulled out, leaving Noland, who was neither in condition nor humor, to enlighten the wondering bystanders as to whether an abduction or a rescue had been effected.

Alida, bewildered by the excitement and general confusion of shifting cars, had passively allowed her new escort to seat her in his train.

"Tell me," he inquired, "how happens it that you are here?"

"Where are we going?" with agitation, she questioned in turn.

"We are returning to the school," responded her escort, who with a smile endeavored to dispel her puzzled look.

"Oh, no!" she responded, "you have not heard. I must go to my guardian, who is ill, perhaps dying. He has written in haste, by Mr. Leftwich."

"Leftwich?" Clinton inquired.

"Yes, the man with whom you met me," and she excitedly detailed the events of the day.

"Then you have had nothing to eat since morning?"

She shook her head, while with increased agitation she exclaimed: "We are going in the wrong direction; my guardian is in Aiken. We must leave this train."

"Wait a moment," her companion interrupted; and going forward he enlisted the sympathies of the conductor for a supperless girl.

"Certainly it shall be arranged, sir," he replied; and so it was that either love for a lovely face, or gallantry felt for a gallant deed, stopped the express that night at a way station to take up a supper for a hungry girl, and Clinton had the satisfaction of seeing a fairly loaded waiter passed to Alida.

"Now go to work," said he, as he smiled at her surprise, "or according to your own lingo, 'Ye kin lay to now.' " She reddened at the recollection. "Never mind!" he continued, "you know how I enjoyed that supper; but come, do not allow anxiety to spoil your appetite. I will explain matters."

With the feeling of relief that his presence inspired, she commenced an attack upon the substantials, and when she was fairly under way, Clinton asked to see her guardian's letter. Having examined it, he inquired: "Have you preserved the others?"

"Yes, except the one which contained a request for the photograph. That was left on the dressing table the morning we visited the city. Several times I searched for it, but never found it."

Clinton's thoughts were busy for awhile, untangling the web of another's weaving. At last he responded: "The missing note fell into the possession of a designing person; from it this one was forged."

"Forged!" Alida exclaimed.

"Yes, and he who brought it to you is a fraud; his name is Noland, and he is a loungeur about the tavern

on the pike, near Shandy Hall. As the messenger is false, so is the letter. Write your guardian, and you will find that he is no more ill than I am. A cruel trick has been perpetrated. Your mistake was in deciding on any move without having consulted with Father Littig."

"How did it happen that you were on this train?" Alida asked.

"I was returning from the Southwest, and seeing you in the company of that man I knew that something was wrong."

"Why," mused Alida, "should there be this ado about me?"

"Do you estimate yourself at no value? Do you suppose that nobody wants you?"

"Nobody can want me," she rejoined, "unless it is the guardian; and I do not see why he should have the wish."

Clinton's arm, as Noland's, found a rest on the back of her seat, but instead of repulsion, there was attraction; finally the tired head dropped upon her companion's shoulder.

How strong was his temptation to whisper the longing of his heart, to tell how it yearned for her, how he had guided and guarded, and was even now protecting her, that she might be his. In the dim light of the car, with its half-slumbering inmates, he might have indulged this pulse of passion by ecstatic kisses upon her lovely lips, but the thought of her purity, her confidence, as she rested there, while her bosom's gentle rise and fall betokened childlike slumber, stirred the loftiest impulses of his nature, and almost transfigured his noble, manly face, as he prayed: "May God, who in His Providence has given this precious charge into my keeping, make me worthy of the trust." He scarcely

moved for fear of disturbing her, only as she relaxed in the sleep of exhaustion he placed her head more comfortably on his breast. At last slumber overpowered him, and his hand rested across her form, while an escaped ringlet, with which he had been toying, was wrapped about his finger.

As the day broke, Alida was the first to awaken. "Can it be that I have lain here all night?" she thought, and would have disengaged herself from the position, but there rested the hand, with her hair entangled; to have budged would have aroused him. She could only wait, hoping that he might shift position, and thus release her; but he did not awaken until the whistle blew for the relay; when, opening his eyes, he caught her timid gaze.

"Shall we leave the cars?" she inquired as she sprang up.

"No," he answered, "we will continue into town, breakfast at a hotel, and return to the convent leisurely."

Later in the morning, bright and beautiful, as they were driving out, the cheerfulness of their hearts responded to the voice of nature. "Will you give me something?" Clinton asked.

"I've been such a trouble to you," she answered, "that all I could bestow upon you would but poorly repay you."

"Take care!" he responded, "I might presume upon such generosity; but I only claim this," and he touched a truant lock.

She looked archly at him and answered: "I may as well give it, as you have been holding it all night," and she submitted to its removal.

"You little witch!" Clinton thought, as he folded it away, "by the same argument, I might claim all."

As they entered the convent grounds Alida realized a

pang that the pleasant ending had at last come to the journey commenced so sadly. "Will you explain to the Superior the cause of my early return?" she asked.

"No, Alida, you do not this time need my mediation. In your own truthful way, tell how, in a sore emergency, you met with the care of a comrade."

CHAPTER XXIV.

CREPT A LITTLE CLOSER.

IN the portico of the Cataract House sat Edith Conrad, and gazed at the rapids as they darted with arrowy speed to their awful plunge into Niagara's seething cataract.

From the depth of her soul swept a flood of thoughts, as restless as the waters; bearing a tide of passions toward a turbulent destiny.

Though not actually in the confidence of the cut-throat euchre party, she had been a partner in the plot to mar a sister mortal.

At Clinton's invitation, Leila, Alida, and herself, with Mrs. Grason, had been enjoying a tour; and lately the English gentlemen had joined them. As they journeyed she had been afforded ample opportunity of observing the intimacy between Clinton and Alida; and she noted with anxiety the relaxation in reserve of the one, and the childlike familiarity of the other; for though there was no evidence of a tender emotion, it seemed dangerously near. Her anticipations had been baffled, the trip was waning, and with it ebbed her hope. The thought disturbed her at night, prevented her slumbers in the day; even at that moment, while the remainder of the party were indulging in siestas, her brain weaved a romance, instead of gathering it from the book that idly lay upon her lap. Thus engaged, the subject of her thoughts approached.

With a smile that was "childlike and bland," she made room for him beside her.

"Have you been napping, Cousin Clinton?" she asked.

"Yes; how happens it that you are not indulging?"

"I have been reviewing our glorious trip," she answered; "fancies were flying fast as those rushing waters."

"And like the foam of the Falls, were they mounting?"

"I don't know;" a sigh lingered on her words, "sometimes they delve into the depths. I was considering your kindness in affording this delightful tour, and so patiently going over the familiar places. You seem never to grow weary."

"No, indeed!" answered Clinton, "Niagara is a grand temple. The tourist who visits it but for a day departs disappointed. Only they who tarry awaken to its fascinations; then, awe-inspired, they would linger forever."

"It must be exercising a benign sway over yourself," she responded. "Your submitting to being hauled about, would tax the amiability of a saint. How pertinaciously Alida, especially, in her sweet innocence, clings to you." She cast a stolen glance at him.

His eye, unchanging, rested on the river. "I should like all of our party to feel that way," he answered.

"Of course we appreciate it," Edith rejoined; "though you would scarcely expect of us the gushing *naïveté* of that girl. Even your sister regards some conventionalities, but her guest knows none; yet you endure it with the amiability of a *pater-familias*."

"Merryfield monopolizes you," he responded; "Lord Kilray has a fatherly feeling toward Leila; as a *dernier ressort*, Alida looks to me. What are you reading?"

"Just like him!" thought Edith. "He flies the track whenever I get down to fine points about his pert pet;" but she again borrowed the smile from the Chinese, and answered: "I have been wading through 'What Will He Do With It?' and would it flatter you to be told that the character of Guy Darrel reminds me of yourself?"

"Your arrow flies beyond the mark," he responded; "that character is in the realms of the ideal. We mortals cannot soar so high."

"You do not admire Bulwer?"

"I do; to enjoy a high order of style, to imagine grand and beautiful characters, I would read Bulwer's later works. They lead us to the lofty; we love to fancy that we live among them. But as a student of the real—as an observer of humanity, I turn to Dickens, who, I think, next to Shakespeare, has best portrayed human character."

Just then, the *tête-à-tête* was interrupted by Merryfield and the rest sauntering to the portico.

"Hope I don't intrude!" laughed the former. "My British soul has planned a frolic to British soil; we're off for the ferry."

"We willingly submit to expatriation in your good company," Clinton assented; and they sauntered toward the river.

As their boat left the shore, Lord Kilray remarked: "May our nations, as mutual shareholders, have an enduring bond of union in this grand cataract. It brings to my mind the lines of Lord Morpeth, which, I have understood, were written in the register at the Clifton House. More probably in the summerhouse then standing near Table Rock."

"Let us hear them!" they all exclaimed; and the old gentleman, in a voice which the scene as well as the words rendered expressive, repeated:

"There's nothing great or bright, thou glorious Fall !
Thou may'st not to the fancy's sense recall—
The thunder-riven cloud, the lightning's leap,
The stirring of the chambers of the deep,
Earth's emerald green, and many tinted dyes,
The fleecy whiteness of the upper skies,
The tread of armies, thick'ning as they come,
The boom of cannon, and the beat of drum,
The brow of beauty, and the form of grace,
The passion and the prowess of our race,
The song of Homer in its loftiest hour,
The unresisting sweep of Roman power,
Britannia's trident on the azure sea,
America's young shout of liberty !
Oh! may the wars that madden in thy deeps
There spend their rage, nor climb th' encircling steep;
And, till the conflict of the surges cease,
The nations on thy banks repose in peace !"

As Alida listened, her arm hung over the gunwale of the boat, and her bracelet glistened in the sun. It attracted Edith's eye, and her gaze was fastened on it.

When they reached the further side, Merryfield assisted each ashore. "As a subject of her majesty," he said, "it is my privilege to welcome you." He conducted them up the bluff, and they sauntered toward the whirlpool.

"These mad waters, and the circling cauldron into which they flow," Lord Kilray remarked, "are scarcely less majestic than the Falls. For ages they have swept resistlessly through that narrow gorge; then glided to Ontario's broad bosom. Race after race of men have watched them, yet none have dared pollute them with a touch."

"The agitations of these waters typify man's life," Clinton mused. "Tumbling, darting, dashing in restless, wild delight, it rushes toward an ever restless pool, where, passion tossed, it circles for awhile—then, tired

of the turmoil, it glides to the quiet lake, ere drifting to the boundless unknown ocean."

Slowly they retraced their steps, and near the ferry landing rested in the shadow of the cliff. Edith was nearest Alida, and holding her hand, remarked: "That certainly is a curious bracelet; unclasp it and let me look."

"I cannot; it is locked."

"Unlock it, then."

"I have not the key."

"Where is it?"

"Mr. Clinton has it."

"So he is the guardian of your golden shackles!" she laughed, and renewed her persuasions until Alida, tired of the importuning, secured the key from Clinton.

Edith at last held what she so greatly coveted, and Alida, leaving her to its inspection, wandered with the others up the shore, until recalled by the boatman, who was about making the last trip over.

When they had moved off, Lord Kilray exclaimed: "As I treated you to a recitation, will not one of the ladies now lend to the charming scene the melody of her voice? Miss Alida, give us 'The Canadian Boat Song?'"

Others also urging the request, she rendered the verses, but she proved a dangerous charmer, for:

The boatman rested upon his oar;
Such voice he never had heard before;
Like Siren's song it wrought a spell,
The light bark toward the rapids fell,
Had not the music soon been o'er
They ne'er had reached the further shore.

The oarsman realized the danger, and pulled desperately from the white caps. The ladies had not appre-

ciated the peril, but it caused the gentlemen to shudder.

After tea, as they chatted on the portico, Alida clasped her wrist, and exclaimed: "Where's my bracelet? You have it, Miss Edith."

"Why, no! Did not you take it? I laid it upon the rock beside you, and was sure that you picked it up."

Alida was intensely agitated, and Lord Kilray and Mr. Merryfield, though they wondered at such solicitude, endeavored to reassure her by the promise to search for it next morning early.

"It will be gone!" exclaimed Alida.

Leila and Mrs. Grason knew that a mysterious association gave it value, and they regretted Edith's carelessness; but that adroit schemer indifferently rejoined: "I'm sorry to have occasioned such distress about a trifle. I will use my best endeavor to recover it, and should I unfortunately fail, I will get you another."

"You will never be able to replace it," Alida replied. "It held a secret about which you know nothing."

The distressed girl, unable to control her feelings, left the company; Clinton followed, and presently, to escape the general gloom, the remainder scattered.

The moon had risen, and its pale light imparted a weird ghastliness to the river, which, with the appalling roar of the waters, might have inspired superstitious dread. It seemed not so to impress a solitary figure that, near the landing on the American side, slowly disrobed; and the moonbeams fitfully streaming through an opening in the cloud revealed Clinton Grason's pale, calm face as he walked into the water. Will he brave the torrent? On one side was the nerve-trying roar, that shook the earth, as the mighty flood leaped down apparently to overwhelm him; on the other, the death-sweeping Whirlpool Rapids; in front, the rushing river, with its treacherous eddies; beneath, the fatal current.

"What if I fail?" he muttered. "It is only to be tossed in the torrent, then pass to the lake and be at rest. But I'll not fail! the bracelet is on the further shore—that bracelet which links me to her. Its restoration will give joy. She shall have it to-night!"

Allowing for drift, he plunged in, and struck across. There was no fancy dash, no flurry; his stroke was steady and strong—it was terribly earnest; a life, as well as a bracelet, depended on nerve and muscle. Breasting the foam-streaked waters, he neared the further shore, and emerged from the river. With his chest heaving and a smile of triumph on his face, he looked like glistening marble. He was soon at the rock where the party had been seated. The wind blew chilly, but he did not heed it, for he was intent upon the search. Presently his eye rested upon a bright object; yes, there was the bracelet, and the tiny key. He again faced the river. "What I have already accomplished can be done a second time! Before it was to attain a golden trinket, now to gain a living treasure; but only to the moon's pale beams I tell it." He then placed the key in his mouth, clinched the bracelet with his teeth, and struck out. The swim proved difficult, he had to breast the current from the American Falls, which sets toward the Canada side. He was not flurried by this discovery into an exhausting stroke. "*Festina lente*," he thought, and moved steadily onward, until he reached the still water near shore; then he finished the swim with a few feverish strokes, his heart throbbing with the hope that the band of gold might prove an abiding bond.

He donned his clothes faster than he had gotten out of them; and a few minutes later entered the hotel. A peep into the billiard room discovered his English friends at play; a glance into the parlor revealed only Edith and Leila; passing to the piazza he was again

disappointed. "She must be in her room," he thought; and repairing thither, tapped at the door.

Alida was lying across the bed with her face buried in her hands, not changing her position, and, addressing as she supposed one of her lady companions, she answered between sobs: "You may as well go away, you cannot help me!"

"Perhaps I might," responded Clinton, through the door. "Come to the portico; I have something to say to you."

At the sound of his voice she sprang up, and exclaimed: "Oh, Mr. Clinton! I was not expecting you," and she immediately joined him in the hall.

"Why not, Alida? Is it not your comrade who helps you out of your difficulties? See!" and he displayed the recovered treasure by the moonlight in the porch, which they had now reached.

"Oh, the bracelet!" Alida exclaimed, smiling through her tears. "Where did you find it?"

"Where Miss Edith left it."

"Then you secured the ferryman? I might have known that you would hunt!" With her grateful glance his appearance arrested her attention. Impulsively she ran her fingers through his hair, and exclaimed: "You've been in the water!" The truth flashed on her mind; with earnestness she drew him in front of her. "Did you swim that terrible river for me?" she asked.

"You were disturbed about the bracelet, and that so worried me that I had to hunt for it." He drew her to a rustic settee, as he added: "Promise that you will not refer to the manner of its discovery. I would not have enlightened even you, but your lynx eyes found it out. You promise?"

"Yes, sir."

"No 'sir,' to me. Style me as you please in the presence of others, but dispense with formalities when we are by ourselves."

"Well, 'cousin,' then!" There was a roguishness in her eye, as she pronounced it.

"No relationships either," Clinton contended, as he drew her to him, and his earnest tone thrilled her as he added: "You have crept a little closer." He felt her tremble as he lingeringly released her, and with an effort at self-command, he sighed: "We are forgetting the bracelet; let us remove the possibility of again losing it;" then locking it upon her wrist, he stepped to the baluster over the water, and tossed the key into the rapids.*

"I wish it had earlier been thrown there!" Alida sighed.

"Then I would not have had the pleasure of bringing the laughter to those tear-stained eyes," Clinton contended.

A tide of conflicting emotions was warring in his soul. "I have stayed too long!" he added, and abruptly left her.

When Alida retired to her room her eye rested upon the bracelet, and there brightened anew a hope that had dawned before.

"Did he risk his life to recover that?" Her heart told her it was for something more, and she pressed her hand upon her bosom, as if to still its rapture; then, gliding to the casement, she dropped on her knees, and breathed a prayer, which the rushing waters bore to the great altar, where, with a cloud of incense, it was wafted upward.

* Before the Reservation Grounds were laid out, the Cataract Hotel extended to the edge of the Rapids.

"What on earth are you doing on your knees?" Edith exclaimed, who had entered without knocking. "Are you petitioning the river god to bring you back the bracelet?"

Alida arose. Some of the old fire gleamed in her eye as she faced the intruder, but commanding her dignity, she answered: "No, I have been thanking the good angel who *did* bring it," and she held the ornament to view.

Edith with difficulty suppressed her astonishment behind the inquiry: "Who brought it?"

"I told you, a good angel."

"Do not be foolish; answer a simple question."

"I have given you the only response there is to make," Alida rejoined.

Her tone and look warned Edith. Suspicion might be aroused. Being on dangerous ground, she retired, ill at ease.

Alida, once more alone, recalled the daring deed, the kindly word, the gentle touch, and her woman's heart told her—she had crept a little closer.

CHAPTER XXV.

COMRADES ON THE SPIRITUAL ROAD.

AFTER the bracelet episode came the Sabbath. Even so small a party as Clinton's was divided in religious faith. We trust their ways of worship tended equally to God.

Edith, Leila, and her mother chose the Church of Rome; and in gallantry, not grace, Mr. Merryfield was to go with them. Lord Kilray adhered to his national church, which also Clinton designed attending; and while awaiting in the parlor, Alida, with a rueful countenance, approached him.

"In trouble again?" he asked.

"Yes, about church. Mrs. Grason expects me to go with her. What would you like?"

"Questions of religion should be decided by conscientious convictions," Clinton answered. "When I took you to a Protestant church, you were without preferences; since then you have had time to make a choice."

"My position is difficult. Convent influences have awakened a love for the Catholic Church, and I have listened to Father Littig, yet hesitate to embrace his faith because both you and my guardian are Protestants." Blushing, she added: "I felt that the religion which you adhered to must be good, and I wanted to know more about it. My guardian advised me to seek

instruction of some Protestant friend. I have no access to their clergy or their books; to whom can I apply but yourself?"

"My theological lore is limited," Clinton responded. "It might be the blind leading the blind; still, I will not desert you, though both shall fall into the ditch. I will present to you the lights that guide my own steps; then you can decide whether to walk in the same way."

"Come, Alida! Are you going?" Leila asked, as the ladies passed the door; and Edith, looking in, had her piety perturbed.

"Go!" said Clinton, "and when you enter the temple, reflect upon the object of your being there; question your heart, learn its wants, and when you come away, commune with it again, and ascertain if you have been brought nearer to your Maker. These are not bodily wants about which you will question; they are supplied. Nor intellectual needs; these are provided. Even your emotional nature, partaking of both physical and mental, can have no cravings which the natural world cannot afford. Learn if this church supplies you with something beyond all this—something that allies you to God—and this afternoon we will stroll off and review the subject at leisure."

"The spiritual contest has come," thought Clinton. "The priest has taken up the gage; I must prepare for the encounter;" and he sought a sequestered spot to pore over his Bible.

Not until the gentlemen were enjoying their after-dinner cigars, did he join them on the portico. Soon Alida appeared, hat in hand, and touching Clinton on the shoulder, she asked: "Are you ready?"

Nodding assent, he tossed away his cigar, and they sauntered off.

"Grason has a curious commingling of the stern man

and guileless boy," Merryfield remarked. "With that child he really seems to be a child also."

"As I have observed him," replied Lord Kilray, "he is a pure type of gentleman; and is less impressed by woman's fascinations than any man whom I have ever seen."

"Alida is the only girl," Merryfield resumed, "who has gotten on the inside of his reserve."

"It is because of her wild nature and artlessness, that are akin to his own," replied the elder gentleman. "She is off on some rough climb that none of her lady friends will undertake, and Grason is humoring her."

While these conjectures were being discussed, Clinton and Alida had arrived at a quiet spot.

"Here," said he, "is the place to consider the sacred subject—in this grand cathedral, of which God is the architect and builder. On either side rise the buttressed walls, corniced with verdure, beneath a marble-like floor of richest green, whose white streaks shimmer in the light. Above is the blue dome, frescoed by Omnipotence. Behind the portal, past which only spirits may enter to bow in adoration at yon altar, where the Majesty of Jehovah is proclaimed, and where the fleecy vapors mount heavenward, symbolizing that immortality of which the bow of promise bids us hope. Here, then, where nature leads us up to nature's God, may we seek to read aright the Book which He has given as our guide."

They had been standing on the river bank. "Come," he said, and he led her to an inviting spot, shaded and secluded. She seated herself on the turf, as she had done in earlier days; and he, half-reclining, rested his head on an arm, and gazed at her as she drooped her lids and nervously played with a twig, in doubtful anticipation of the contest which she had invited,

Clinton, interpreting her embarrassment, remarked: "I am no formidable theologian, nor even a father confessor, but like yourself a seeker of truth. Let us dispassionately review this subject that we have agreed to consider. As lights to guide, you have the teachings of the priest, who has spared no pains in imparting the doctrines of his church. I have, to instruct me, this volume," and he produced his pocket Bible.

At first, in a faltering way, Alida reviewed the history of the Church of Rome, as she had derived it from her instructors, but soon, with faith and fervor, she eloquently portrayed its adaptations to human cravings. "There is no sorrow," she said, "that it may not comfort, no want that it does not supply; it relieves life of its burden, and death of its terror. With its beautiful liturgy, there is a grand ceremonial, which appeals to the human part of our nature." She dwelt on the fascinations of its imagery, and with enthusiasm exclaimed: "Who would not find comfort in such a faith from the doubts of those who have not its blessed assurances?"

Clinton had been attentively listening, and as she concluded he arose from his lazy posture; his eye rested thoughtfully upon the Bible ere he responded: "The ideas that you have advocated are attractive and consoling. It seems a pity to disturb the doctrine by cold analysis, but you should not be willing to receive a faith at second hand. Look for yourself beyond a sectarian system. To determine intelligently you will have to search the Scriptures." He then turned the pages of the little volume, and sought to draw the lines between the loving words which Christ has left us, and the ritualistic record coined by human frailty.

Alida's face grew serious as she replied: "The distinctions you have drawn between Divine and human laws are startling."

"I have presented," he answered, "only such proofs as may be found in God's record. If I have disturbed your cherished convictions regarding the Romish Church, which the busy builders have been reconstructing, until they have well-nigh obliterated its primitive simplicity and truth, I have at least pointed to the chart by which that church was founded:

" 'I like a monk, I like a cowl,
I love a prophet of the soul,
.
Yet not for all his faith can see,
Would I that cowed churchman be !

Do not blindly follow his lead, but with the Bible, work out your own salvation, with a God-given, intellectual liberty." In his earnestness Clinton had arisen. "Come!" he said, "it is late; let us return."

Alida walked pensively by his side, but ere they had gained the hotel she said: "I have to thank you; you have left me much to think about. I shall pray earnestly for spiritual light for us both."

With a loving look he answered: "I trust that we shall find it on the same pathway, and then we shall be comrades on the spiritual road."

CHAPTER XXVI.

REFUGE.

A WEEK subsequent to the Sabbath at Niagara our tourists parted. The English gentlemen went into Canada, marveling at the subtle sympathy between Grason and a schoolgirl. Edith returned to Virginia, to brood over the mortifying conviction that this same schoolgirl mysteriously stood in her path. Mrs. Grason and Leila retired to what domestic felicity could be found at the Hall, and Clinton sought the Glen for respite from excitement; while Alida joined an old schoolmate, to see her married, after which she proposed returning to Leila.

The day of ceremony arrived; there were the usual smiles and tears, and then the scattering. The bridal party was to take the express, and an accommodation was to be Alida's conveyance to the depot nearest Shandy Hall.

Emmart had been his sister's escort, and Alida being present his scheming mind suggested a masterly maneuver. He approached the gentleman in charge, and remarked: "You've a crowd to look after. Helen goes with the bride, so I've a vacant seat in my buggy. I will see Miss Lucett to the cars, if you so arrange."

Thus it was that Alida found herself assigned to Mr. Harvey's charge, much to her dislike; but she consoled herself with the reflection that the drive would be brief. Harvey, however, timed it otherwise, and as their carriage pulled up at the station, the whistle which she

The clouds rolled onward, shutting out the day, and fitful gusts swept by, driving the dust in eddying columns. Suddenly, almost the blackness of night settled over the scene, and then from the inky curtain shot a bright flash, followed by the appalling thunder, that rolled through the angry sky. Huge drops of rain began to fall, and the solitary girl looked around for refuge. Nearby a gate stood invitingly open, and an avenue led to the adjacent mansion; it was the only chance. She ran for it, and flushed and breathless, reached the portico as the tempest swept the earth. The door stood open, and a silver-haired matron, rather stout for stateliness, crossed the hall with a view of closing it.

Alida explained her presence. The old lady, with an inquisitive, though reassuring smile, responded: "Coom in, my dear. Lord! 'ow it's pouring. I 'ope you're not wet?" and she felt Alida's dress. "You're just in time; coom in!" and she conducted the newcomer through the obscure hall to an equally dark apartment at one side.

"Wait, my dear, till I loit the gas," she said; "it's time to loit up ary way."

Alida, fearful of stumbling over furniture, remained motionless, and her wonder at the old lady's vernacular was increased when the illumination revealed the magnificence around. Ere she could recover her conductress had left the room.

"Where am I?" thought the startled girl, for the apartment surpassed in grandeur anything of which she had conceived. The reflection of her forlorn self in the mirror caught her eye; and behind, in the open doorway, an apparition brought a blush, that gave to her a wondrous beauty.

"Oh, Mr. Clinton!" she cried, as she suddenly turned, "where am I?"

"Of all the places where you must not call me 'mister.'"

"It is the Glen!" she exclaimed, with agitation.

Clinton divined its cause. "This big room startled you," he said; "let us go to the library. So the storm has blown you hither?"

"I would not have come," she answered, "had I known that it was the Glen; I must go at once," and like a scared bird she looked out of the window.

"Of course! if you wish it," he responded. "But you will hardly leave before dinner; it should be ready." And ringing for Sally, he directed her to conduct the lady to her dressing room, and then ordered dinner.

As the housekeeper led the way to an apartment that was scarcely less elegant than the room below, she reflected: "The poor afeared thing! She thought thot she 'ad coom into some fine 'ouse, full o' wooman folk, and 'ere she is, in a bachelor's den; no wonder she's frightened! If she only knew what a gen'l'man the misther is, but of course she dinnot. Lord, 'ow 'ansom! I'd think ony misther but 'im would be in danger, an' not 'er, but I've given 'im up lang syne; there's nary lady will mak ony impression on the loike o' 'im, 'e's sot in 'is ways."

She relieved Alida of her hat, and fussed around apparently to see to the room. Finally she inquired: "Be there onything else noo?"

"Nothing, thank you!" responded Alida. "I've not much to fix."

"Lord, miss! ye dinna need," exclaimed the admiring matron; and having no excuse to linger, she withdrew.

"What fate has brought me to this place?" Alida reflected. "What an escape! Suppose I had dropped in on a stranger? I do know him, that's a comfort.

But there's the dinner bell," and hurrying her toilet, she rejoined Clinton.

The thunder rattled and the rain beat against the window, which made it all the cozier within. By the richly appointed dining room, and its silver service, Alida was again dazzled, but her companion put her at her ease, and through the meal she chatted merrily.

Their *tête-à-tête*, like the first, was accidental, and Clinton felt that Providence was brightening his path. The priest's warning amounted to nothing now; he had grown familiar with the idea that the girl was destined to be his.

Upon returning to the library, Alida looked out upon the unpromising night. The rain was still holding a gusty revel, with little prospect of cessation.

Clinton watched her. "Oh! if I could but keep her," he thought. "What matters it? Who would be the wiser? Whose business is it? Why cannot I have one evening of her dear company?" He looked longingly and lovingly at her. Her innocent, beautiful face conquered the temptation. "No!" he sighed, "she relies upon my word and honor; I would not shake her confidence for the wide world." Just then Walter placed the coffee on the table.

"You need not remain," the master said; "hitch the bays to the buggy, look to its lamps, and when all is ready let me know." As the man withdrew, he continued: "Come, Alida, preside; let me have the luxury of a lady at the head of the board. Now tell me how it has happened that the storm wafted you here to brighten my board?"

"It is a kind interpretation of my intrusion," she answered, "for I have too often troubled you. I was at the Riggs' wedding, and afterward a gentleman drove me to the station. We were just too late for the train,

and he proposed to take me in his buggy to Shandy Hall. I accepted the invitation; and to relieve Mrs. Grason's anxiety we telegraphed how we were coming. The escort had been drinking, and my ride was rendered uncomfortable, so disagreeable in fact, after we turned off the pike, that I left him, and was endeavoring to regain the main road when the storm gathered."

"You had no occasion to turn from the pike!" exclaimed Clinton. "Who was this fellow? What did he do to you?"

"His unfortunate condition must be his excuse; I found refuge here."

Walter re-entered. "Is it Shandy Hall you are going to, sir?"

"Yes; why do you ask?"

"Because, sir, jist as I war hitchin' up, John he kim out as he had seed the lantern, an' he axed me what I war a-doin'? I told him you war a-gwine to drive to the Hall. 'What! this 'ere night?' ses he; 'he'll never git thar, fer the bridge is washed away at Buck Run. I'm jist kim from thar, an' you'd best go tell master,' ses he."

"Very well, Walter; put up the horses."

Alida's face was agitated. "Is there no other way?" she asked, again taking an observation of the weather.

Clinton replied, after a moment's thought: "You see what it is out there. Come, sit here, and let us review the situation;" and he conducted her to the sofa. "It is now 9 o'clock; in the circuit we should have to make, it would be midnight before we could reach Shandy Hall; for you to arrive at such an hour, and in this storm, would excite inquiry. The friends whom you have left will infer that you have arrived at your destination; those to whom you go will conjecture that you have not started. He whom you left on the road is

not likely to inquire about you. Accident has cast you here, and, stormbound, you must necessarily remain. Did you but know it, this is the safest, most natural refuge."

It would have been impossible to have met her earnest gaze, and not to have told the truth. She seemed to have been aware of her power, perhaps, too, had fathomed her comrade's character; for his argument reassured her, though she did not comprehend the closing words.

"Refuge!" she exclaimed. "Yes, what other refuge have I? a waif on the world—no home—no kin—and a far-away guardian, who keeps from me even his name!" She clasped her hands, and the crystal messengers brimming, lent luster to her eyes. With an effort at control, she resumed: "Does he consider me as one whom food, and raiment, and the routine of education will satisfy? Does he suppose that I have no heart? no wish for the opportunity to express my gratitude? I know I should make him love me, for he can be kind. I've proof of that; but still he is cruel!"

The effort to hide her own emotion prevented her from observing the distress that she had occasioned Clinton, who, controlling himself, responded: "Perhaps he 'must be cruel, only to be kind.' Do not judge harshly; trust him; he knows best. But why puzzle about the recluse guardian? You have a comrade; be independent of his love. Tell me, who was your companion in the buggy?"

She shook her head, and the laughter came into her eyes. "You would thrash him," she answered.

"You seem positive; how do you know so well?"

"I have seen you tried."

"Well, if you will not gratify my curiosity, indulge my love of music."

"With pleasure," she answered. He led the way to the parlor, and raised the lid of the piano.

"If I lived here," she exclaimed as she touched it, "I'd give these stiffened keys some exercise."

"How welcome you would be!" Clinton responded. "Call it home—there is none so fitting for you as your comrade's; be the mistress of the Glen!"

How those words would have gladdened another! This innocent girl received them only in the way of comradeship, but they did comfort her, and to hide her emotion she turned to the music and said: "What will you have? Let me see—ah, yes! perhaps this will suit you?" and she sang with spirit:

"Now, is it not a pity such a pretty girl as I
Should be sent to the Nunnery to pine away and die?
But I won't be a nun—no, I won't be a nun;
I'm so fond of pleasure, that I cannot be a nun."

"Is that the answer?" Clinton questioned, catching her mischievous twinkle. "Then, after all, we are to be comrades on the spiritual road?"

She nodded assent, and asked: "Why is it you have bestowed so much pains upon my rescue from the Romish Church, and have left your sister there?"

"She has never approached me upon the subject, but is established in her belief; you were unsettled, and while my argument removed your doubts and confirmed happiness, the attempt to shake her faith would inflict needless pain, for after all,

" ' We meet at one gate
When all's over.' "

She again turned to the instrument, and sang what she thought would please him, and as the spirit of the breeze wafts the bark in sunshine or shadow so she swayed his emotions in the change from grave to gay.

He noted the skillful touch, the volume of voice, and

the refinement that mental training added to her beauty. "Is not this my work?" he thought. "Why may I not have it? Why not tangle my fingers in her soft hair, and tell her how its meshes have enthralled me? Why not yield to the impulse to clasp her to my bosom, and with rapturous kisses claim her? By all the rights of possession she is mine."

The quivering engine in his breast throbbed with a sympathetic impulse, it sent its crimson current to his burning face, but the strong will that was natural to him maintained the self-mastery. "Not now, not here," he thought, as he abruptly rose and paced the floor.

"Tired of music?" Alida asked, laying a hand upon his arm. "Like a spoiled boy, you weary of everything."

One would have supposed that her girlish touch might have fired his blood. No, her contact and confidence smothered feverish frailty, and he was strong.

"Do you remember the engravings that you showed me at the Hall?" she asked, as he resumed his seat and she assumed another near. "They have suggested that some day I shall go to Europe. When he who takes care of me shall discover my love for music, it may occur to him that it is worth cultivating."

"I doubt if he designs you for a public singer," replied Clinton.

"Dear knows! he says nothing of the future. But, Mr. Clinton, your views are so like his they startle me. I do not feel, though, exactly the same to him that I do to you, for he has not been with me in trying scenes; he cannot know me as you do; then he is old, he would not understand our comradeship and might exercise authority for its interruption."

"Would that distress you?"

"I should be tempted to rebel."

A smile played over Clinton's face, his hand actually found its way to her tresses, and was tangled in them; suddenly it was withdrawn; a slight sigh escaped him, and he responded: "You may not be thus tried, though you have been tried to-day in another way, and must feel fatigued." Summoning the housekeeper, he ordered her to accompany Miss Alida to her room, and to occupy herself the communicating apartment, to be within call, should she want for anything. He then bade her "good-night," and going to the library rang for Walter, whom he surprised by the order to saddle Ranger.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed the servant as he hastened to obey, "wha' am de boss a-gwine dis hyar time ef night, an' it a-rainen?"

As he turned into the house, after holding the rein while the master mounted, he resumed: "I'll decla'! ef dat don't beat ary ef de qua things, I's know'd de boss to do yit; ef it had a-been me I'd a stayed gist hyar wha' der's de most abstractions."

An hour later there was also a surprise for the clerk of the hotel on the pike, for Mr. Grason walked in and requested a room.

"It is a black night to go home in!" the clerk remarked. "You would scarcely find the way in the lane; there might be another accident, such as happened this afternoon."

"What was that?" Clinton asked.

"The lightning scared Mr. Harvey's horse; he was pitched out of the buggy and badly hurt. Fortunately, there was nobody else in with him. Have a nip, sir, before you retire?"

"No, thank you; I'll manage the nap without the nip."

"So Harvey was in the lane at the time of the storm!" Clinton mused when alone. "Being drunk, he allowed his horse to get away with him. Well! he has been punished without my agency. What an escape for that treasure at the Glen!"

Alida was stirring betimes next morning. Sally endeavored to attract her to the picture gallery, to prevent her noticing the master's absence; the old woman divined the cause. "Ah! bless 'im!" she thought, "'e is just the true, noble mun to guard a hinnocent lamb loike her!"

Alida, however, was not to be held within bounds. She stood on the portico, breathed the fresh morning air, surveyed the blue sky and the green earth renewed in its freshness by the recent storm. She basked in the rays of the early sun, as her delighted eye caught Aurora's offering in the pendant raindrops that sparkled like liquid diamonds, then she bounded off into the beautiful grounds, responsive to her own instincts, answering the welcome of the merry songsters that challenged her competition, and was amid the flowers that bent to kiss her as she passed.

"By the powers!" thought the old gardener as he watched the maiden, "the misther 'av the fairest flower of them a'!"

Thus ingratiated before she had greeted him, Alida was soon reveling in floral wealth as she had not done since she climbed in search of the flowers that "damask the mountainside" about the old home.

It had been Clinton's expectation to return before he could be missed, and it was still early when he crossed the Glen porch.

"Where is Miss Alida?" he inquired of Sally.

"Lord! Mr. Clinton, I could no more keep 'er in the 'ouse than a freed bird. She's off i' the grounds all bare'eaded."

"I'm glad she feels at home," said Clinton.

"Yes, sir," there was mirth in Sally's eye, "she feels at 'ome wi' 'ee."

"We are old friends, Sally; I will hunt for her; have breakfast ready;" and he started into one of the garden walks, to find her with John, who had already loaded her with his fragrant treasures.

"I am anticipated," he said; "I had hoped to show you the flowers in their morning freshness."

"But you see I am up before you," she laughed.

He did not undeceive her, and helping to carry her load, they returned to the house.

The morning and her comrade had restored Alida's spirits, but not forgetting her being a transient guest, when breakfast was ended she asked to be taken to the Hall.

"Of course," he sighed, "my pleasures thus early end; but first let us look at the pictures," and he led her to the gallery, which proved a pure delight; but upon the animated descriptions of her companion. Alida hung with deeper interest. When at last they were returning through the parlor, she glanced at the clock, and exclaimed: "Ten already; we should have been off long ago!"

"Are you tired of home?" he asked.

She turned to the piano, and for answer sung:

"The dearest spot on earth to me
Is home, sweet home;
The fairest land I've longed to see
Is home, sweet home.
There how charmed the sense of hearing,
There where hearts are so endearing,
All the world is not so cheering
As home, sweet home."

"You've a charming way of replying," Clinton said, "and let me assure you that, as in this home you found a shelter from the shower, it will no less prove a refuge from the storms of life; should they sweep over you come to your comrade's home. Here are some lines I scribbled last night; at another time read them;" and he handed her a slip of paper.

The mists gathered in her eyes, and she ventured not to speak, but unfastening the flowers at her bosom she selected a moss rose and a sprig of honeysuckle and gave them to him, to tell in their own language the answer of her heart.

CHAPTER XXVII.

OUT INTO THE NIGHT.

To the rear of Shandy Hall was a piece of woodland, through which a brook meandered, adding its murmur to the sigh of the breeze and the song of the feathered tribe as they flittered in this congenial home. It is not surprising that Alida's old wandering instincts had discovered the romantic spot, and the afternoon previous to her contemplated return to school she sought its solitude to think of the past and dream of the future. She was entering upon her final scholastic year; when that should be ended where would be her home? The pleasant conjecture was rudely interrupted by the snapping of twigs—she looked up. A shabbily-dressed old man was approaching, whose uncouth form and surly countenance were too well recognized.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "I see you have not forgotten your old pap. I've had a hard time, but have come up with you at last. There was no chance of getting to you at that cursed convent; then, out of consideration for your feelings, I didn't keer to call where them big bugs was, though my business was pressin'."

"What do you want?" Alida asked.

"Don't say 'What do you want' to me, gal; but as a loving daughter, inquire: 'What can I have the pleasure of doin' fer you, pap?' fer I am your pap, and there's no rubbin' that out."

"You said differently in Richmond."

"I was paid to tell that yarn. If I'm not your pap, who is?" he sardonically laughed. "That fellow Grason has humbugged you; I'm your pap, and the old woman, she's your mam; she's grieved mightily about you. I've been hard up, business is not what it was before Henry and Nat got hurt; then they left, and as I was sayin', times is hard; it's fer that I've been a huntin' fer you, as you ere in luck now and kin help us."

"Here is my purse," Alida replied; "it contains all I have. You are welcome to it."

"That's not it; your pin money ain't a drap in the bucket. I haven't watched and waited fer sech a haul! You've got to go to that young man of your'n, and make him give you fifteen hundred dollars. He'll shell out. None ef your nonsense, jist go do it; you're a pet ef his'n, and he'll not refuse you."

"Ask Mr. Grason for money?" she exclaimed. "Do you think me low enough, even if my guardian would permit it?"

The man, coarsely laughing, asked: "Who is your gardeen? Don't know your pap, nor the gardeen what has been feedin' and clothin' ef you? Never seed him, I suppose? Well, I'll tell you who he is, and fer the information get me the fifteen hundred dollars. He's that Grason, who's been a-totin' ef you over the country; him, and no other."

Alida had started to her feet at the beginning of the interview. She now drew herself to full height, and with the old spirit exclaimed: "I do not believe it!"

"You'll have to believe—it's him what's ben a deceivin' ef you, not me. What's more, I sold you to him for one thousand dollars. The priest forked over the money: go ask his reverence. For the sake of his cloth, he'll tell you it's gospel truth. That fine young

chap was taken with your pert face that night in the cabin, and he kept a-pesterin' ef me till I let him have you; you b'long to him, and ere no more'n his mistress."

"What do you mean?" Alida demanded indignantly, though not fully understanding the significance of the remark.

"I mean," responded MacNeal, with cruel villainy, "that he bought you for a use best known to young bloods—he kept you at his house the other night. I'm sorry to say it of ary daughter o' mine, yet you ere his now. As he's fond ef you, and 'll give you arying, coax him out o' the money for the old woman's sake."

With enforced, terrible calmness, Alida replied: "As you have sold your daughter, she owes you no obedience. Your foul words are those of a lying villain!"

MacNeal would have arrested her as she swept past him, but she awed even his callous soul, and he growled: "She's a reg'lar tigress. I'd best git out'n this neighborhood 'fore I'm hounded down."

Alida managed to reach the house, but it was like walking in a dream; the limbs moved, but the overwhelmed mind took no note of them. She did not respond to the tea-bell, and the servant sent to call her found her on the chamber floor unconscious.

There was an alarmed household, and the doctor, of course, sent for. He restored her to consciousness, but failed to detect anything seriously the matter, and gave only general directions.

Alida made light of it, and stated that she had returned from a walk feeling faint; she considered herself well over it, and declined having any one remain with her during the night.

When at last the household slumbered, she arose noiselessly, and packed a few toilet essentials; not an

article of her rich jewelry was taken, none of it adorned her person, save the cross and the bracelet. The former she would not part with; it was given her, she said, "when I was what I was." The bracelet she attempted to remove, but in vain; and finally she sank upon the floor and cried from sheer exhaustion.

"The key is at the bottom of the Niagara," she said, "and my promise to wear this band is in his heart; I have no right to break that. What, the promise or the heart? Something seemed to whisper, 'Neither.' Well! it will have to remain; he ventured his life to recover it—for whom? a child of the wretched and depraved. Why has he, as a guardian, tenderly cared for me, but that he supposed me of honorable parentage? And I have repaid the kindness by twining about his heart, to cause it misery. I now understand his tender care, his earnest look, his passionate kiss—shall I, blotted by the blood of foul parentage, accept the charity and love of the noblest of men? Shall I drag his proud heart in the dust? I love him far too much for that. I should write him, I know, and also the family, but I cannot endure the torture. I came among them a stranger; leaving no record, I shall be the sooner forgotten."

Almost crazed by these reflections, she sat upon the floor for hours, swaying her body in her abject misery, which finally settled into a silent sorrow, and externally calm, noiselessly she descended the stairs, opened the hall door, and passed out into the night.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SULLEN SORROW.

ALIDA'S departure was an enigma to the ladies. Their surprise was mingled with disappointment that friendship should have been thus lightly treated.

Clinton only judged its cause. He was aware of her being beset by enemies, and he conjectured that she had learned of her dependence. He knew her womanly instincts, and could understand how her proud spirit had been overwhelmed.

He had Noland and MacNeal shadowed, but they proved ignorant of her movements. He visited southwest Virginia, only to sadly revive its memories.

Thus autumn glided into winter without a clew having been discovered, and sick at heart he retired to the Glen to wander in its halls and picture the scenes of that happy evening when she sought refuge from the storm. He would tread the garden path, where she had walked, bearing the flowers that were tributes to a beauty which they failed to rival. "Why did not I keep her?" he would exclaim. "I had her under my roof! I have felt that her love was mine ever since I drew her to my bosom and left the kiss upon her brow. I should have done it again, and have told her my heart's secret; then might I have been saved this misery, and she spared her night of agony, ere, like a wounded bird, heartsore and homeless, she wandered out."

Then the paroxysm over, he would relax into calmer reasoning. "No, Clinton Grason, it was not the time or place to thus have startled her; desert not the elevated plane of duty upon which you stand; fall not from the pinnacle of honor upon which her respect has placed you."

With such fluctuating thoughts, he brooded over his sullen sorrow and had well-nigh nursed it into frenzy, when the battery smoke that encircled Sumter drifted into the tide of human passions, and settled over the land.

The family at Shandy Hall remained firm in their loyalty to the Union, and it seemed natural that Clinton should have been with them, but at that time the morbid state of his mind awakened sympathies for the other side. He had seen the teeming multitude of the North, and had journeyed through the sparsely settled regions of the South. It required but the arithmetical calculation to foresee results.

His consuming sorrow left no room for political emotions; he therefore saw more distinctly than others which was the weaker side. It awakened sympathy in his stricken heart, and devoid himself of the conceit of both sections, that the strife which had been fermenting for a quarter of a century was to be put down in ninety days, he deliberately allied himself with those whose sorrows were to be kindred to his own. The sun seemed to have gone down on the brief, bright interval of his gloomy existence, leaving the blackness of despair. He would hide his wretchedness in the dust and smoke of battle, and find his refuge in a soldier's grave.

His horse was equipped as upon previous expeditions, and mounting the chestnut, he passed out into the night.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE PROTEGE.

WHEN Alida crossed the threshold of Shandy Hall with naught left her save its memories, she directed her steps toward the station, and awaited with feverish impatience the train's arrival. The headlight soon flashed its ghastly rays athwart the platform, and as it was unusual for that train to take no passengers there, she was not approached by the conductor, and remained ignorant of her destination until she saw the morning rays gleaming on the dome of the capitol, and became aware of her approach to the city of Washington.

"Too near!" she thought, but as the train had reached its terminus, she went to the waiting room to collect her ideas, now that she was fairly adrift.

An hour later she was still there, when general bustle denoted the arrival of a train, and in a half-interested way she watched the comers. Finally, her attention was directed to the meeting of two ladies; and their proposal to go into the lunch room reminded her of her own physical wants. Realizing the importance of not fainting by the way, she followed their example.

Her deliberation at the repast was in contrast with those who were snatching a meal between trains, as though digestive organs could be run on the plan of a limited express. No time table concerned her, there were no friends to meet; and she became an involuntary listener to the conversation of the two ladies.

The younger remarked to her companion, who was well on the shady side of forty, though a bright face gave her the appearance of being younger: "Dear Miss Bolton, I little expected to see you."

"Pressing business brought me; our music teacher left. The vacancy must be filled at once; perhaps you may help me?"

"I cannot recall a suitable person," replied her friend; "but so eligible a position will be sought after."

"I hope so. I must have a first-class teacher."

"I cannot suggest any one," responded her companion, "but my friend, Mr. Molray, probably may. As a professor of music, he will know of available talent. Let us go at once and catch him at his breakfast."

The ladies were preparing to depart, when the idea occurred to Alida that this was her chance. She had no time to question with timidity. Approaching the ladies, she said: "I could not help overhearing your conversation; possibly I may fill the vacancy."

Miss Bolton's startled look changed to one of inquiry, and the blending of girlish modesty and womanly dignity that she saw in the troubled face interested her.

"Are you a proficient musician?" she inquired.

"I have been so considered."

"You are young to be a teacher! Have you recommendations?"

"You would not know the persons from whom I could obtain them. Endorsement from some friend of your own would prove more satisfactory. I am willing that my qualities shall be tested."

The reply impressed Miss Bolton, and she was again about to inquire, when her companion interrupted: "Who are you, miss? What personal recommendations can you give?" She had noticed Alida's simple attire, and its incongruity with the bracelet.

The girl's beautiful eyes gazed tearfully at the interrogator, and there was a nervous twitch at the corner of her mouth, as she responded: "My name is Alida Lucett. I am in trouble, or I would not be seeking a position. That is all I have to tell."

Miss Bolton realized that she was dealing with no ordinary person. "Your proposal is reasonable," she responded, and she summoned a carriage.

"Would you accept this girl on her musical attainment alone, without knowing her character?" questioned her friend aside.

"Certainly! I am rarely mistaken in a face; she is a lady."

They were soon at the Molray mansion, and on Miss Bolton's introduction, she explained the object of the visit. "I hope," she added, turning to Alida, "that our chance meeting may be the beginning of a pleasant acquaintance; but your test of proficiency must be severe. We have advanced scholars."

Mr. Molray, like most enthusiasts, was of a sensitive temperament. He noticed the refined features, and retiring manner of the applicant, and appreciated what must be her feelings in anticipation of the ordeal. Had Miss Bolton known of the sympathy in his big heart she would have doubted the capacity of the head to judge impartially.

"Come, my dear," said the musician, "select something," and he placed before her a pile of music.

"Would it not be well," suggested Miss Bolton (*sotto voce*), "for you to choose?"

"Ah, madam!" he adroitly responded, "to learn her taste she must be allowed its exercise."

Alida needed no indulgence; she drew from the collection something difficult. At the first sound of the instrument, the experienced professor knew that the touch

was by a master hand. His attention became riveted on Alida, for as her soul-inspired fingers swept the keys her eloquent eyes flashed with a living fire; then, as the music faded into softer chords, the "fringed curtains" drooped to hide the mist that gathered responsive to the emotions that were stirred within her stricken heart.

With the soaring genius of the performer, Mr. Mol-ray's enthusiasm kept pace, and its contagion resulted in their all standing by the piano in wondering admiration. The professor had no longer scruples about difficult pieces; his judgment was made up, and he placed his favorites before her. Finally he submitted his own last production; at her execution of this his enthusiasm knew no bounds, and he exclaimed: "I humbly thank you for thus grandly rendering what I have conceived, but could not so express."

Alida blushed as she bowed an acknowledgment. Her face then resumed its pensiveness, and her hands rested idly in her lap.

"Miss Bolton," said the professor, "we have no occasion to discuss the question so kindly submitted. You have marveled as well as I. With some experience perhaps in imparting information this young lady is more qualified to teach than myself."

"I fear," responded Miss Bolton, "that your desire to accord Miss Lucett the justice which she deserves induces you to underestimate yourself."

"Not a bit of it," he responded. "Mine is talent cultivated; hers heaven-born genius."

Miss Bolton had not needed this encomium to settle the question, but the drift of her thoughts demonstrated the tendency of the mind to borrow care, for she feared that such musical ability, combined with personal attractions, were not to be buried in a seminary.

"Can you sing?" Molray asked. He was scarcely able to keep his eyes off Alida.

"Yes, sir, a little;" and with all her heartache, youth's mischievous twinkle gleamed in her eye. The professor observed it, and placing before her an intricate selection, he asked: "Will you kindly illustrate your idea of a little?"

The rendition demonstrated the volume and sweetness of her voice, and charmed the listeners. Other songs were submitted; it seemed as though Mr. Molray's musical soul could not be satisfied. Fortunately for Alida the arrival of a pupil reminded the professor that time was not his own.

As the callers were departing, he remarked: "Miss Bolton, in telling you that you would be fortunate in securing this lady's services, I must say to her that her genius soars beyond the plodding teacher; she can sway the multitude."

Alida shook her head as she answered: "I thank you; but I would avoid notoriety, and shall be thankful for a quiet situation."

As the professor accompanied them to the door, he said: "This musical treat, Miss Lucett, will forever ring in my ear: should ambition stir you, you have a fortune in your grasp."

This was treason to Miss Bolton, who hastened the departure.

The seminary was located in the Middletown valley of Maryland and close to the foothills of South Mountain, which feature of the landscape was particularly congenial to Alida, for those who have been reared among the mountains love to gaze upon these silent sentinels. They shelter from the blasts of early spring, that disastrously sweep over leveler lands—their summer verdure seems of a deeper green, in con-

and Jackson were at Frederick. Then Confederate troops crossed the Catocton Mountain, and their columns of infantry, canopied by dust, marched along the Middletown road leading toward Turner's Gap.

Alida stood among the teachers and watched them. One little rebel lady, whose sympathies had been long restrained, leaned over the fence and asked: "What troops are these?"

"The Stonewall brigade," a gray veteran answered.

Immediately interest was redoubled.

"How differently they look," Miss Bolton remarked, "from the soldiers of parade; dirty, dusty, ragged, almost shoeless, their tinsel weather-worn—even the battle-flags are rent."

"All tell the grim story of war!" a sad voice added. It was Alida's, and she continued: "Yet hope beams in every eye, their steps are steady, their musket barrels bright."

The teacher who before had questioned, again leaned over the fence, and to a young officer as he passed she called: "Where are you going?" He turned toward her and raised his cap, the sun shone full upon his bronzed but handsome face, which lost its sternness as he noticed the ladies, and lighting with a smile he answered: "It is usually to victory, miss, with Stonewall Jackson."

The ladies were startled by his bearing and address, and did not notice that Alida had shrunk behind a tree deadly pale.

"Ah!" said the little Southern lady as they returned to the house, "there are gentlemen in those ragged ranks!"

The shifting panorama next displayed the valley covered with blue coats, with which the master organizer McClellan, was advancing. On they swept toward the

Gaps in South Mountain, and soon the rattle of musketry told that death's carnival had begun. The Gaps were taken, and the Federals pressed onward. Next, the wind wafted the roar of heavy guns from the direction of Harper's Ferry. The stern work was there going on. Then ensued a quiet; an afternoon and another morning passed. It was the calm before the storm which, on the evening of the 16th of September, burst on the banks of the Antietam.

Miss Bolton was loyal to the Union, and when she saw the enemy at her door her solicitude was great, and it was further taxed as she listened to the ceaseless roar of artillery which told of a great drama of the war.

Ensuing silence inspired hopes that the worst was over.

Evidently McClellan was not defeated, for there was no indication of retreat; more likely the rebels had retired.

"Ladies," she said, "I believe that the battle is ended. Our wounded will need nursing; now is the time for women to do their part. I call for volunteers."

Alida promptly responded. She was feverishly anxious to be on the field. Lint, bandages, food, stimulants, all that they could think of needing, was gathered together, but the afternoon was upon them ere they started. Then commenced war experience. The pass in the mountain was blocked by wagon trains, and the dust, the cursing, and general bedlam, confused and delayed them, so that on the approach of night they were still far from the field, and Miss Bolton, curbing her impatience, directed the driver to stop at a farmhouse. To a matron who stood in the doorway she said: "We are on the way to the hospitals; can you take us in for the night?"

"I suppose so, though the house is about full; I will try to stow you somewhere. It's dangerous on the road at night; the country is infested with stragglers, and the rebels have not gone."

"I had hoped," Miss Bolton remarked, "as there had been no fighting to-day, that they had retired."

"No, indeed, madam; the two armies have stood looking at each other, as if undecided whether to fight or to run away."

The ladies were ushered into a house, where several slightly wounded soldiers had assembled. Of course the topic of conversation was the stirring events of the previous day. The general opinion was that the heaviest fighting had been on their extreme right, where Hooker had faced Jackson. Several times, as the tide of battle swayed, they thought they had about flanked the rebels, especially late in the evening, but A. P. Hill came up just in time to check the advance.

Alida's interest was intense, and she acquired an idea of the topography of the battlefield and the location of the troops.

During the night the rebels retired, and our party, thus relieved of anxiety, next morning, after a brisk drive, reached the hospital. Miss Bolton reported to the surgeon in charge and inquired: "Shall we go to the field, or is there work for us here?"

"You had best remain, madam; most of the wounded have been brought in. They need your services here."

With energy, Miss Bolton organized her corps of nurses, and many a poor fellow was rendered comfortable by their gentle touch.

Alida worked with double interest among the pallid sufferers; it was a relief, and yet a dread, not to find the object of her search. These poor fellows had shelter, food, attention; what if he was lying wounded, or ready to be tumbled into a nameless grave? The thought was maddening. She observed an ambulance about starting, and approaching the driver, she inquired: "Are you going to the field?"

"Yes, miss."

"Wait a moment, if you please; I will ride with you."

The man was surprised at her proposal, and he answered: "It is a rough place for a young miss to go to."

Alida had neither time nor inclination for argument, but again urging him to wait, she darted off to find Miss Bolton.

"I am going to the field," she said; "there is plenty of help here, and it may be needed there."

"My child!" exclaimed the astonished lady, "you will be horrified; it is no place for you."

"I shall not think of the horrors in the work before me," she responded; adding with intense earnestness: "*I must go!*"

Miss Bolton saw that further objection would be useless. "This cruel war!" she thought; "the heartaches that it causes! The poor girl is bearing a sore burden; let her seek relief in her own way."

"What part of the field are you going to?" Alida asked of the driver.

"I am no way particular, miss. I pick up my load anywhere."

"I wish that you would drive to the extreme right," she requested. "I have understood that the heaviest fighting was there."

"Certainly, miss. I suppose you're anxious about some friend?"

"Many will mourn for their dead," she answered.

Just then the ambulance mules shied as they passed an artillery horse in his death spasm: near by was a broken gun carriage, across which rested the longitudinal half of a human body; the next horror was a row of dead, lying as though the line had been mowed by one sweep of the sickle; they wore the blue, and a

poor creature, with some spark of life, moaned as the ambulance passed.

"Let us pick him up," Alida exclaimed; and she assisted the driver to lift the helpless form, then reaching for her satchel, she said: "I am much obliged to you. I will now walk."

"Indeed, miss!" the good-hearted fellow declared, "I do not like to leave you."

"Never mind," she answered, "I am not likely to meet any but soldiers; they are too brave to harm a woman." Seeing the man hesitate (he was fascinated by her sad face), she added: "When you return look for me; I shall probably not be far from here." She had seen the bodies of Confederates lying beyond, and thither directed her steps. It seemed that only the dead were among those ashen faces; the wounded had been gathered during the armistice.

"If he is here, I will find him," she thought, "and if not, he must be in the retreat." Still she wandered in her lonely search, for save this solitary girl there was no mourner among the rebel dead. Finally the sun got behind North Mountain and then, as it were, through the shadowy realm of death, she pursued her way; there they lay, many of them as if asleep—sleep that is a respite from anxiety, hunger and pain; sleep that is a rest after the march—and what is death but oblivion from life's weary way?

So thought Alida, as she gazed into each face, furrowed by the lines that told of human passion. Suddenly her glance was horror-stricken, and her step arrested—a familiar form lay across a limestone ledge. She sprang beside it—sprang as a miser to clutch his gold—sprang as a mother to recover her child—sprang as a woman whose pent-up feelings burst their barriers when that which had been lost is suddenly regained.

Prostrating herself beside it, she clasped the limp head and covered the face with kisses, while her torrent of tears mingled with the death-dew of his brow. When relieved by this storm of grief, with nervous energy she examined the recovered treasure. Suddenly hope brightened her face; his skin did not feel cold as it would in death. She put her finger on his wrist, but could find no pulse, and hope began to falter; she placed her ear to his breast—yes, the laboring heart throbbed feebly. It seemed the expiring effort, ere life's current ebbed forever. "But yet there's life; while it lasts there is hope."

With this rekindled came the requisite energy. Early habits had rendered her fertile of resources. She secured two blankets from those who no longer needed them; one she placed as a pallet, where the ledge afforded shelter; then lifting the helpless body, she deposited it upon the improvised couch, and covered it with the remaining blanket. Seating herself, she placed the unconscious head in her lap, and proceeded, drop by drop, to administer the brandy with which she came provided. As her head bent over him, her warm breath mingled with his, chill and feeble; it seemed to renew his life. Absorbed in her work, she was not aware of an approach, until a Federal surgeon stood beside her. She looked appealingly into his benevolent face and asked: "Can you have him taken to the hospital?"

The doctor knelt beside the body and examined the wound. It had been caused by a ball penetrating the lung. He next investigated the pulse, the temperature. "It is useless," he said; "he will die, and the sooner by removal. You can do him no good."

"I shall not leave him," she answered.

"Surely you will not remain on the field all night!"

"I will make the fight for his life," she persisted, and added: "If you will leave me a canteen of water and a light, for it will soon be dark, and something fixed to keep the wind off, I could get on."

The officer saw by her determined manner that she was resolved; he brought the water from his ambulance, also a gum blanket, which he arranged so as to protect her from the wind by placing one end of it upon the rock ledge, weighed down with stones, and supporting the other with stacked muskets. Next, he produced a bayonet, and placing it point downward, inserted a candle in the other end. Having completed these arrangements he asked: "Is there anything else I can do?"

"No, thank you, doctor."

"I dislike to leave you," he said, "but duties are pressing. I will return in the morning; perhaps we shall remove your patient then." He meant for burial, but he allowed her hope to take advantage of the doubt, and reluctantly turning away, disappeared in the gloom of the early night, leaving the girl with her comrade.

The owl hooted, and the autumn wind moaned a requiem, but she did not hear them; her faculties were concentrated on the battle for a life. Assiduous stimulation did the work, the skin became warm, the pulse distinct, and the patient began to mutter incoherently; though the words were disconnected, had Alida possessed a clew, she would have known what he was re-enacting. "I want her—sympathy—sympathy. The braggart. Accept or the handcuffs." Then he clinched his fists, and the nurse was kept busy holding the blanket over him, as he again cried out, "Name, Lucett—punish you again."

"Poor darling!" Alida thought. "Has he been defending me?"

"Never mind," she said, "it is all right."

"Not right," he cried excitedly.

Remaining quiet for awhile, he again exclaimed: "Charge that battery! there's a chance to die!" A wild gesture, as though waving a sword, threw open his jacket; a book fell from the pocket, out of it dropped some faded flowers and a photograph; these she placed in her own bosom; and searching for anything else, she discovered a gold-mounted revolver. "This would be confiscated," she thought; "I may as well keep it also, though I need no reminder. All that I am, all that I have, are his gifts."

"Water!" he cried. "If my comrade was here I'd have it. Charge! she's in the enemy's lines!"

Alida placed the mouth of the canteen to his parched lips. Refreshed by the drink he became tranquil, and dropped into a natural sleep. She, fearful of disturbing him, moved not until the dawn streaked the east and gilded the summit of South Mountain.

With morning came the ambulance. The doctor again stood beside her, and as he gazed upon the soldier slumbering in the young girl's arms, she looked up, and a smile of triumph brightening her face she whispered: "Saved!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

CHANGE OF BASE.

A CONVALESCENT soldier sat by the window of a Federal hospital. "Good-morning Captain Clinton!" said the head of the medical staff, approaching. "You look sad; is it because we are about to send you away?"

"Though you have been kind, Dr. Welton, the prisoner has little choice between places of confinement. Perhaps your suspicion of sadness arises from a kindred feeling."

"He who has mourned the loss of a wife and babe has reason to be sorrowful. A boy only is left me; he, with patriotic ardor, has gone to the front; you are about his age and resemble him; hence it is, young rebel, that I have been kind to you."

"Doctor, you could not help it, I know the goodness of your heart; but for your care I should be in a nameless grave."

"It is a ministering angel to whom you are indebted. You would have perished had not she found you on the field, and through the chill night nursed you with a woman's devotion."

"You surprise me, doctor; who is she?"

"A magnificent girl." The doctor then drew from his pocket a parcel, which he handed to Clinton. "She confided this to my care," he said, "with the request that it be given you."

Clinton unfolded a lady's handkerchief, and disclosed

to his astonished gaze a photograph, a Bible, and two faded flowers. How had the fidelity and love, of which these last were emblems, been verified.

At the sight of the photograph, the doctor asked: "May I look at it?" and as he did so, he exclaimed: "It is the picture of the girl."

Clinton nodded assent, and pointed to the embroidered word "Alida" in the corner of the handkerchief. As the old gentleman's eye rested upon it, he exclaimed: "That name recalls sad memories; you will find your Alida; even the battlefield has its romances, but the long, dark past shuts out the hope that mine will ever be recovered."

He returned the photograph, and arose to depart. Clinton, grasping his hand, detained him. "Doctor," he said, "you cannot know my gratitude!"

"It is nothing," responded the old gentleman; "this has impelled my kindness;" and he presented a photograph of his son. "Should war's chances bring you together, befriend him, and you will doubly repay his desolate old father."

It was to Fort McHenry that Clinton was transferred. The prisons at that time consisted of buildings previously used as stables. He had endured the discomfort for several weeks, in association with the crowd of unwashed Confederates, all of whom had come up to Colonel W. E. Jones' standard of efficiency; for that veteran had said: "I wouldn't give a d— for a soldier that wasn't lousy." Impelled by this discomfort, and prompted by rekindled hope, he determined to make a break for liberty; and on the day before Christmas took the initiative by approaching one of the guards who had a good-natured look and slipped a banknote into his hand as he remarked: "Here's something with which to make Christmas merry, and I am sure it will

do you good to give me a few comforts in return. Find me a jacket. The ladies in Maryland have cut the buttons from this; it won't fasten, and I get cold. Besides, I am thin from sickness; I want a belt to hold up my breeches also a cap. Slip these things in, and there will be two more notes for you." The band of his pants was lined with greenbacks, which had been treasured for emergencies. They proved *noteworthy* arguments, and the articles were forthcoming.

At dusk it was customary for the corporal of the guard to march in and call the roll of prisoners. While he did so, on this particular evening, Clinton stepped in line behind the rear soldier, and as the guard filed out he passed with them. In the gloom, his forage cap, blue jacket and belt, with the U. S. brass plate and the scabbard, proved a sufficient disguise. When out of the building, the guard was dismissed, and he glided into the gloom. Still he was within the inclosure, and sentinels paced the wall at short intervals. Slowly approaching this, considering what next to attempt, he observed a soldier moving in the same direction who, when near the guard, gave a peculiar whistle, which being answered by the sentry, he advanced. A few words passed between them, the guard turned his back, and the man went over the wall.

Clinton also advanced, and imitating the whistle, continued to approach without heeding the challenge.

"Why don't you give the countersign?" said the guard. "Do you want to be shot?"

"Never mind the countersign," Clinton replied. "I'm going into town."

"To what regiment do you belong?"

"To the — New York." That regiment had come the previous day; its men were as yet strangers in the garrison.

"You can't go," the sentry petulantly responded.

"Look here," Clinton rejoined, "I've been a soldier before to-day; I'll not spend Christmas Eve without a drink; you let the other fellow go over the wall; treat me civilly, or I'll report it."

"I see you've got me; wait till the next guard turns, then over with you, but be back before I'm relieved."

"All right!" responded Clinton, who was soon striding rapidly toward Baltimore. He reached the neighborhood of a prominent hotel, where a well-known little Irishman, with black whiskers and red cheeks kept a hack stand. He knew his man and tapping him on the shoulder, moved into the shadow.

"It's Mr. Grason, by all the powers!" exclaimed the astonished Hibernian. Clinton placed his finger on his lip. "I've just escaped from the Fort," he whispered; "drive me to the Glen."

"All right, sir, just wait. I'll fetch the carriage."

An hour later the hack stopped in the Glen lane and Clinton was soon under his own roof.

Repairing to his chamber the Federal apparel, together with what was left of Confederate rags, were consigned to the glowing grate, and very shortly the cleanly shaved and neatly dressed Mr. Grason descended to the library, looking as though he had never been away.

Sally responded to his ring. "Praise be to God!" she exclaimed, "you are whoam after bein' awa' so lang, an' looking loik as usual."

"Yes, Sally; so are you. I hope all are well? Have my supper right soon."

The housekeeper hastened to comply, and was wringing her hands with joy as she announced to Walter that "The misther has coom." The waiter grinned from ear to ear as he presently entered the library with the tray, and exclaimed: "I sholy is glad to see

you, Mars' Clinton; youse ben gone so long, an' these times is so skeery, that we is ben mons'ous oneasy 'bout you."

"Thank you, Walter. You see I have the faculty of unexpectedly turning up all right."

When Walter returned to the kitchen he exclaimed: "I tells you, we is all had our skeer fer nuffin; he ha'n't ben to no war; he looks too cla-complexuned an' fresh sort o'; he's jist ben a larkin' ef it."

When Clinton had supped he reclined in his luxurious chair, puffed a cigar, and was enjoying a gentlemanly ease, when Walter's scared face appeared and he announced: "De house is got cabalry all around an' de hall am full ef soldiers," in verification of which an officer appeared in the doorway.

Clinton, rising quite at his ease, asked: "To what am I indebted for this honor?"

"A prisoner escaped from the Fort has been traced in this direction," replied the intruder. "I am ordered to search for him."

The character of this explanation was evidently modified by the host's politeness and the elegance of his surroundings.

"Proceed, sir," Clinton assented, and addressing Walter, he added: "Conduct the gentlemen through the house."

When they had withdrawn, he called Sally, whom he ordered to prepare lunch in the dining-room for the soldiers, and to bring wine and cake to the library.

"Surely, misther, thee will na be so civil to the loons, after they 'ave gane stomping over the 'ouse?"

"Yes, Sally; it's a Bible injunction; provide the best we have."

She went to do his bidding, though with a bad grace. Presently the spurs again jingled, and the captain re-entered.

"We regret to have troubled you," he said.

"We will drown the annoyance in a glass of wine," responded Clinton. "Your squad would also appreciate some refreshment on this holiday eve." Stepping to the door, he said: "Men, my servant will show you to the dining room, where you will find something to remind you of the good cheer at home."

"This is better than we have been accustomed to in Maryland," the officer remarked, as he enjoyed the ease to which he had long been a stranger.

"We learned in schoolboy days," replied the host, "that Maryland and Virginia, were given to hospitality. I endeavor to perpetuate the good *régime*."

"In Virginia," the captain observed, "we have been treated to shot and shell. Those starved rebs can stand up and fight."

"Perhaps their incentive is Federal commissary stores," Clinton suggested.

"That would work when they advance, but when we are pushing them it is cursed stubbornness."

"That trait is shared by all Americans," Clinton answered. "There is little difference in fighting material. Numbers decide."

"Quite correct! Why cannot the rebels see it, and give in? No, they will fight to the last ditch. You are lucky, sir, in keeping out; your surroundings are nicer than the cold comfort of camp, yet that is paradise compared to the muddy march and the horrors of the field. If I remain longer, I shall become demoralized, yet I dislike to return without that runaway rebel."

"The place most likely to meet him," Clinton suggested, "will be on the next battlefield."

By this time the sparkling scintillations in the captain's brain had dazzled his vision. He did not ob-

serve the meaning that lurked in the depths of the dark eyes that rested on him. A moment later the convivial squad had departed, and the host was left to his reflections.

When Walter entered the stable next morning the best horse was missing. He rushed to the house exclaiming: "Dem onery Yankees is done robbed us after all!"

"I told the master," sighed Sally, "thot they were na worthy of 'is kindness." Vainly she awaited his coming to breakfast, and when, patience exhausted, a search was instituted, it was discovered that his bed had not been occupied; and that as mysteriously as he had returned he had silently stolen away.

CHAPTER XXXII.

WOMAN'S WIT.

AFTER the Maryland campaign Miss Bolton's school reopened. A world in itself, whose inhabitants explored the rivers of literature that flow into the ocean of knowledge, delved in the wonderland of science and soared to the realms of higher art.

It was into these altitudes that Alida led her pupils, and inspired them with her own spirit of harmony.

This tranquillity at the academy was soon disturbed. The excitements which had preceded the opening of the session were re-enacted toward its close. An army mightier than before swept through the land. Scholars and teachers sought refuge in their distant homes; all save the one who was homeless.

Ewell's and A. P. Hill's corps came first, and Longstreet's followed. Onward they swept, toward the Pennsylvania border. Upon their track followed the Federals, and a regiment of cavalry hovered close in the rear. The commodious seminary proved agreeable quarters; for Miss Bolton's patriotism was outspoken, and the charming teacher was not the least of the attractions to the susceptible young officers.

One of these, Lieutenant Force, came in on the second evening of their arrival, and finding Alida upon the portico he halted just there, and admiringly directed his optical battery upon her.

"I am told, Miss Lucett," he said, "that on the Antie-

tam battlefield you nursed a wounded rebel. Why did you select the gray?"

"There were loving hands to attend to the others," she replied.

"Were you to find me stretched upon the field, would you be the same ministering angel?"

"I should help you all I could."

"Then, Miss Lucett, if you thus come across me, and you should see that I am about to die, I would want you to sing me your favorite hymn. It would relieve death of its horrors, if the soul were wafted to the other world on your exquisite notes."

"I might feel like those Jewish maidens, who hung their harps upon the willows. How could I sing and the heart bleeding because of human woe?"

"Well, promise to try."

"Let us hope that no such contingency will arise, but should it, I will grant your request, provided you promise *me* one thing."

"What is that?"

"To be kind to your enemies when they shall be at your mercy."

"As the order from an angel of mercy, I shall obey."

Tea being announced they descended to the supper room. The meal was in progress, when Captain Rust of the cavalry entered. He apologized for being late, owing to a brush with the enemy.

"Where?" exclaimed several.

"Quite near, but it was only an enemy of *one*. You need not be alarmed; besides, we captured him."

"Tell us about it," the lieutenant replied.

"Owing to his suspicious movements in coming out of the mountain," the captain narrated, "we determined on a capture and closed in at a gallop. He did not wait to be surrounded, but made at my party to break

through before the others could come up. There were flashings of pistols, and tumbling of men and horses; then out of the dust and smoke our rebel arose, saber in hand. As for an instant he stood at bay, his pluck excited my admiration, and I called out to him: 'What's the use of dying? Why don't you surrender?' This seemed to bring him to his senses, and he handed me his sword."

"Where is he?" inquired Miss Bolton, who with Alida, had been an interested listener.

"In the yard, madam, with the guard; but as we have to ride to-night, may I ask that you allow us to lock him in an upper room and place a guard at the door?"

"Certainly," replied the hostess.

"Would not the fellow enjoy supper, after his exercise?" suggested the lieutenant, whose promise to be kind to his enemies was still fresh.

"Yes," coincided Miss Bolton; "allow him to come to tea."

"Thank you!" the captain replied. "I suppose we must."

As Alida left the table, her shadow accompanied her.

"Will you sing for us this evening?" he asked.

"Yes, if you will see that this prisoner has his supper."

"I will do it at once," and stepping to the door he directed the guard to take the man with them and go to tea.

The hall lamp shone upon them as they ascended the steps. Alida caught sight of the prisoner and shrank behind the lieutenant to conceal the emotion that would have betrayed her. The stern, sad face and dignified bearing were not to be mistaken.

"He is no ordinary man," the lieutenant remarked.

"He is a gentleman," Alida forced herself to say, as she abruptly left and rushed upstairs. A good cry relieved her; then true to her comradeship, she commenced earnestly to consider the situation. Having "bodied forth" a plan, she removed traces of agitation from her face, and going to the rear wing of the building entered the last room on the same floor and side of the house as her own apartment. A few moments sufficed to set the chamber to rights, open the window and fasten back the shutters; completing this arrangement she went below, meeting Miss Bolton on the way.

"I have fixed the northwest room for the prisoner," she said.

"Thanks, my dear!" responded the good lady. "You are always thoughtful; I was coming to see to it."

As they entered the parlor the lieutenant exclaimed: "Ah! Miss Lucett, when I thought we had you for a song, you vanished. You will not forget? The stipulation has been fulfilled, and the rebel is now resting on the portico."

She seated herself at the piano, and improvising the music, sang:

"COMRADE TRUE.

"Doubt that the shower of cloud-born tears
Will freshen the thirsty earth,
Doubt that the crystal fount appears,
Giving the brooklet birth,
Doubt that the torrent on mountain side
Will ripple, and rush with glee,
Doubt that the river's swelling tide
Moves onward to the sea;
But never doubt a Comrade true,
Will ever faithful prove to you.

"Doubt that the golden orb of day
Is source of light and life,
Doubt that the moonbeam's borrowed ray
Will silver tint the night,
Doubt that the Winter's robe of snow
Enfolds the flowers of Spring,
Doubt seeds that Summer zephyrs sow,
Will Autumn harvests bring;
But never doubt a Comrade true,
Will ever faithful prove to you."

The voice of the singer reached the prisoner. "The bread we cast on the waters comes back," he thought; "the verses I gave her during her refuge at the Glen abide in her heart."

It was not Alida's policy to protract the entertainment. She soon left the parlor, and standing on the portico gazed at the stars, while, as if abstractedly, she sang in a low voice:

"If a girl should elope
On a ladder of rope:—"

She had gotten only thus far when the lieutenant joined them.

"Miss Lucett," he said, "go with us to-morrow to the signal post and view a parade ground, such as you have never seen."

"Are you not afraid to trust me?" Alida laughed. "I might be a rebel sympathizer."

"Not a bit of it!" he replied; "rebel ladies are not so civil to us blue coats. From them we receive scowls and scorn. If possibly one were to sing we would have 'Dixie,' or some other piece savoring of rebellion dinged into our ears." Advancing a step he added: "But you have touched a softer chord."

She in turn retreated, and as her skirt touched the

prisoner she responded: "Lieutenant, you flatter so gracefully that I will say, *should the clouds not gather we may anticipate the signal.* Good-night!" and she passed into the house.

About midnight a female figure emerged from the front door, noiselessly closed it, and passing out glided into the shadow of the orchard. Shortly she reappeared bearing a coil of rope, and entering the house removed her slippers, and ascended to the third story, where, close to her own chamber, was a ladder leading to a trapdoor that communicated with the roof; she mounted this, and was soon on the top of the house. With noiseless tread she reached the front corner, and fastening the rope to the cornice, carried it over the edge of the building, but sufficiently taut, as it extended along the side to form a communication from a window of her own chamber to that of the one in which was the prisoner. She next placed the line around the back corner and fastened it to a chimney at the rear. Here her movement was stealthy as a cat, for she was over the head of the guard. When the rope was in readiness, she lay upon the roof above Clinton's window, and leaning over the edge gave a low "Hist!" He had been on the *qui vive*, and moved the line, to signify that he heard her.

"All is secure," she whispered; "follow this rope, the sash of the furthest window is raised; go in and await my coming."

She could discern his figure moving, and to her satisfaction saw him swing into the window. As the feat was accomplished, he could not but think: "Make the door against a woman's wit, and it will out at the casement."

Alida then recoiled the rope, retraced her steps, and soon was in her own chamber.

In an instant Clinton held her to his passionate heart. "Oh, my darling! Why did you leave me?" he exclaimed.

"I could not stay," responded the agitated girl. "I learned of my birth and of my dependence upon you. Cruelly was the truth revealed by the man who called himself my father."

"He lied!" exclaimed Clinton.

Alida clapped her hands over his mouth. "Hush!" she whispered, "there are officers in the house."

In a subdued tone he resumed: "On the Sharpsburg field your steps were directed to me, and again in the emergency of to-night are we brought together. Do not contend against Destiny. The heart that has long cherished its love could not endure the agony of your loss. Do not doom me to desolation because of a lie, that has awakened the proud sentiment of your nature. Have not I reared you for myself? Day by day my hope was strengthened until it reached the verge of realization. Will you blight it because of a foul falsehood? A nature such as yours does not spring from the refuse of mankind. Promise that you will not hide from me?" He had placed a hand on either side of her face and was holding it in front of him, while with intense eagerness he looked into her eyes. "Promise to remain here until I return; or should you leave, that you will go to the Glen. Recall the happy morning when you agreed to recognize it as home. Go, take possession; it is all arranged for you. I have not reared you to the comforts of such a home to have you a wanderer."

In the earnestness of his look she realized the unfathomable depth of the man's love. "Henceforth we will be comrades," she said; and raised her lips to his.

"Would that I might take you now!" he sighed,

"but our Confederacy demands even these priceless moments. General Lee is in ignorance that a Federal force is near. It was to obtain information that I incautiously lingered. However, it has resulted in bringing us together. It is hard to separate, but I must go where duty calls."

"Far be it from me to detain you!" replied the brave girl. "Here is your pistol; I kept it as a memento. A horse is saddled and ready; come!" and she guided him along the route that she had previously taken.

"You must return," Clinton urged, "before I bring out the horse; his tread may alarm the guard. I will wait ten minutes for you to regain your room."

"No, half that time will suffice; delay is dangerous."

"One moment," he urged. "I have much to explain; until the proper time trust me. Press the little side knobs of your bracelet, and it will reveal a secret to you."

"I know that you are the guardian," she responded.

"Then give me the right of one to advise you."

"You have the right of purchase, for you actually bought me."

"Yes, I bought you and I made you my idol, and did for you all that fond idolatry could suggest. But I wanted to win your love untrammelled by bonds of what you might consider duty. In another year I should have told you everything, and just as I thought that you were loving me for myself, my idol left me; and so desolate, that time and again have I sought oblivion at the cannon's mouth. But these dark hours have passed, and with your promise comes the dawn of hope that when the angel of wrath shall cease to desolate our land we may be happy."

After another lingering kiss they parted, and Alida sought her pillow. A calm peace pervaded her spirit, for her lonely heart had found a long-lost comfort.

He turned toward the sparkler in the northern sky, and following alike the polar star of duty, sought to communicate that information to the Confederate leader which was to result in the concentration of the Army of Northern Virginia upon what was to it the fatal field of Gettysburg.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ONE GLANCE WAS ENOUGH.

THE death grapple had taken place in the fiery wilderness, and to fight, march, and starve, was the Confederate's sorrowful doom.

Clinton had been detached as a special scout, and constituted one of that corps of intrepid men who kept General Lee informed of the enemy's movements so that he ever anticipated them.

Having been on duty for three successive nights he had curled up in his blanket; but too tired to sleep, his thoughts were dwelling on the stern realities around, when he heard his name loudly called; and responding to the summons was informed that General Lee wished to see him. He was soon in the presence of his chief, who, standing before his tent, was dividing an orange. Presenting half to Clinton he remarked: "May it refresh you, captain, for the work you will have in hand." Long afterward the peel of that orange was treasured as a memento of the revered leader.

"I regret," continued the general, "that it is necessary to send you back into the Federal lines, but I suspect that General Grant is about making a movement to the left flank. Gain for me the information at the earliest moment."

About 10 o'clock the following morning, an officer, wearing a nondescript uniform, rode leisurely among the Federal camps. Bustle and confusion reigned, for

there was a general breakup and every one being busy with his own affairs, the stranger passed unnoticed.

"Yes," he thought, "this bustle, and that column of dust mean a flank movement, and the sooner General Lee is in possession of the information the better."

He rode on confidently; a picket was encountered, but a word disarmed suspicion; he passed out of the Federal lines and was considering how best to return into those of the Confederate (for it was hazardous to get back), when a company of Northern cavalry swept down upon him like a body of Bedouins. A running fight ensued, pistols were emptied and some saddles; and his jaded steed was fast being overtaken when a detachment of Stuart's cavalry came to the rescue.

The Federals did not give way at the odds against them, but with spirit pushed the fight. The conspicuous gallantry of their leader drew a crowd of assailants; he had rendered two of them *hors de combat*, and the balance pressed him the harder. Clinton's attention was directed to the *mêlée*; the officer had lost his cap, the light fell upon his animated countenance. One glance was enough—it was the face of which he had the photograph. The chance had come for him to redeem his promise to the doctor. He dashed between the combatants: "For shame!" he exclaimed, "to press such odds! Give back!" Striking up their swords, he crossed his own weapon with that of the Federal. The soldiers became interested spectators of the duel, as the bright blades glittered like lightning flashes. Both proved swordsmen, but it became apparent that the Federal was wearied by previous exertions, and equally evident that Clinton was acting on the defensive. Presently, with an adroit twist, his adversary's sword was tossed shimmering through the air.

"You are my prisoner," said Clinton.

The Federal stiffly bowed assent.

By this time a soldier had recovered the weapon, and handed it to the victor who, restoring it to the young officer, remarked: "A gallant soldier deserves to wear his sword."

The skirmish was now over, the handful of Federals having retired. The Confederates also retraced their steps. Clinton, with his prisoner, upon reaching camp, spread his gray blanket under a tree. "Here's my quarters," he said, "I bid you welcome! Make yourself at home and excuse me for a moment." He was then lost to view among the trees, in search of General Lee.

The Federal officer was ruminating over his situation, when Clinton returned, bearing a handful of hard biscuit, a chunk of bacon, and a canteen of water.

"Come!" he said, addressing his quasi guest, "here is our dinner; it is little better than the sweet potatoes which General Marion offered the British officer, but it is seasoned with a welcome."

"A soldier's appetite is not often wanting," was the polite rejoinder; "and in this instance, it is not so much at fault as the conjecture regarding your unusual consideration."

Clinton was reclining as though weary, and slowly munched a biscuit. "Your name is Welton, that accounts for it." The last words were drawled out and became inarticulate in the sleep that followed.

The young man regarded the speaker with astonishment, as he heard his own name pronounced by this stranger, who had so suddenly succumbed to tired nature, and he watched the careworn expression on the thin face, about which there was a boyish beauty, as the brown locks fell negligently over the forehead, for he felt a curious interest in his captor.

Presently the neighing of a horse aroused the sleeper,

and his ideas took up the thread of the situation as he saw the blue-coated officer.

"I ask your pardon," he begged, "it was remiss in me to fall asleep, but Mars' Robert works us tolerably hard, nor does your general allow us much rest; the human machine will wear out."

"I've had a contemplative time," his companion rejoined; "you left me food for reflection, and I've been trying to solve how it is that you are acquainted with my name?"

"Your father and I are friends, and to repay the debt which I owe for his sympathy and care while I was a wounded prisoner, I promised to look out for you."

"How could you know me?"

"I have your photograph; besides, features like yours are indelibly impressed upon my mind."

"It is fortunate," the captain answered, "or I might have been chopped into mincemeat—instead I go to prison."

"You are paroled."

"You must be mistaken, we are not exchanging."

"It comes as a personal favor to me from our general; and it affords pleasure to thus prove that a grateful patient was not unmindful of his promise. It will be a relief to your father that your perils of military life are ended. There will be no more exchanges; your government has adopted the policy of extermination."

"You entertain a dismal view of your cause," the captain remarked.

"It is but a question of time; I thought so at first, but early victories made us hope against judgment. The hope faded when a great captain was stricken at Chancellorsville; it vanished when our columns melted away in the charge at Cemetery Hill."

He seemed indisposed to continue the painful subject,

and rising, unhitched their horses, as he remarked: "It is not always polite to speed the going guest, but just now

'The time is out of joint!'

Let me conduct you to our lines."

They rode in silence. At the place of parting Welton grasped his companion's hand, and said with emotion: "I can never forget the events of to-day, nor do I understand them."

Clinton returned the pressure, and they parted. The Federal pondered as he went: "How long will it take even Grant to conquer heroes who can fight and famish, nerved by their conception of liberty and law?"

The Confederate returned pensively to his blanket; the face of his late guest had recalled the being, who, in dreams or waking hours, was in his thoughts the Comrade.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

INVITERS INVITED.

THE eventful period had at last arrived. The electric news that the articles of Lee's surrender had been agreed upon was flashed over the land, causing the great Northern heart to leap with a wild bound of joy. Part of that heart was Dr. Welton. The old gentleman and his son had returned to their home, and as the former read the news, he exclaimed: "We must hunt up Captain Clinton; if the brave boy yet lives, he will be found with the remnant of veterans at Appomattox. Our time has come to help him."

"He looked as ragged as the rest of the rebs when I saw him," the captain declared. "It is not likely that he has bettered his condition, but it will be no easy matter to bestow favors on that man."

"Theodore Parker has said," his father rejoined, "that 'pride is both a virtue and a vice;' let us hope that our young friend possesses only the better part of it."

Influence at the war department passed them to the front, where they arrived to witness what was left of the Army of Northern Virginia (less than eight thousand strong) stack arms for the last time.

As the newcomers stood among a group of officers who were viewing this impressive scene, the captain's eyes were roving; at last they rested on a figure stand-

ing apart. "There he is, father!" he exclaimed; "do you see him near the trees, by the side of his horse and resting an arm on the saddle?"

"That is he," responded the doctor, when he had strained his old eyes in the direction pointed out.

They cheerily approached, but remarking the sadness of his wan face, their expression of joyful greeting was suppressed, for they respected the sorrow that beheld the hopes which Manassas, Chancellorsville and Cold Harbor had awakened, now lying in the dust of Appomattox. The old gentleman laid his hand on Clinton's shoulder, and in a fatherly way he said: "Ah! my dear boy, we knew that we should find you here. We have come to claim you and take you home with us."

"It is like my good old doctor," Clinton exclaimed, and a grateful smile played over his face. "Here, too, is the captain; we will never again cross swords."

"Thank heaven, no!" ingenuously rejoined young Welton. "I have come to help father do his persuading, for I wish to return the hospitality of your headquarters on the gray blanket."

Clinton looked meditatively. At last he seemed to remember that he might be considered remiss in acknowledging their politeness. "I appreciate your invitation," he responded; "it does indeed look as if the war were over when Northern friends take us tattered Confederates to their hearthstones. It is fortunate that we have met; had you not come, I should at an early day have hunted you, that we might consider a matter requiring joint investigation."

"Then come with us," the doctor begged. "We can be in New York by to-morrow night, and will then look into it."

"No," answered Clinton, "the investigation must be here; you will be my guests."

It had not occurred to the gentlemen that this tattered rebel had a home, especially one to which he could off-hand invite such friends as themselves, and the captain, who had vivid recollections of the refreshments on that blanket, was dubious of the creature comforts that might be expected.

Clinton interpreted the hesitation, and a twinkle lurked in his eye. "Come!" he said, "my plan is the necessary one."

The curious interest which he had awakened was destined to deepen with the metamorphosis which a Washington tailor effected, and he became still more of an enigma.

An express hurried them to the Relay, at which place the Glen carriage was in waiting, having been telegraphed for. As Walter presented himself with the usual grin, his master inquired:

"All well at the Glen?"

"Yes, sa'."

"Anybody there except the servants?"

"No, sa'."

"How are they at Shandy Hall?"

"All well, sa'."

By this time they were speeding toward the Glen. Driving through the gateway, it was not too dark to see the elegant surroundings, and the doctor, who was slow to take in the situation, inquired:

"Whose place is this?"

"Your patient's bachelor abode. Having dropped the captain in the Confederacy, he is henceforth—Clinton Grason, and his welcome to you is equal to his gratitude."

"You don't mean to say," exclaimed the old gentleman, "that you left this elegance to live on bacon and biscuit, green corn and apples, and with a tattered

blanket as a home, simply for the fun of fighting on the side of the rebellion?"

"That is about it," responded Clinton. "When the war commenced I had experienced a misfortune, from which death would have been a relief; hence I went where it might be honorably sought. In choosing sides I was influenced by what appeared the weaker. A messenger of mercy, she whom yourself has styled a 'ministering angel,' visited me upon the Sharpsburg field; it was she who partially lifted this veil of despondency, and by a curious adventure during the Pennsylvania campaign, it was entirely removed. Then, as earnestly I longed for life's continuance, and for the close of the war; but my love for our peerless leader and sympathy for our brave people, impelled me to stand by them in the dark hour."

"Though their judgment was misguided," replied the doctor, "yet the world will respect them for their fortitude."

Sally's bounty atoned for the starvation that the master had lately endured. When the last glass of wine had been drained, and the guests were again in the library, Clinton produced two photographs; one of Alida, the other of Captain Welton. "Compare," said he, handing them to the doctor; "do you trace a resemblance?"

The old gentleman, having minutely examined them, replied: "There is a likeness; I remember that the picture impressed me when at the hospital. Something about it seemed familiar."

"When I was last with you," Clinton reminded, "you referred to the loss of your wife and babe; did the child die at the same time as the mother?"

"The babe was stolen," he answered.

"Was the name 'Lucett' connected with your family?"

"It was my wife's maiden name," responded the doctor. "To what do your inquiries tend?"

"To establish the fact that these photographs are of brother and sister."

"Great God!" exclaimed the doctor; "how can this be? Was I with my own child and did not know her?"

"Calm yourself," Clinton entreated, "while I tell you a curious story." He then narrated the various incidents of his acquaintance with Alida, and he concluded: "The full details have been communicated to no one, though the priest is partially acquainted with our history. You will appreciate the reason for my reticence; but you, as a father, have a right to know the entire story of your child; and that she is such I no longer entertain a doubt."

"In the description of the woman," remarked the doctor, "I recognize the nurse who had charge of the infant. She was associated with a man who, having been detected in a burglary, was obliged to flee. The woman accompanied him and took the child, either through feelings of attachment, for she was at that time dependent upon her for sustenance, or else, prompted by her dissolute companion, with a view of securing ransom. Probably they had been too hard pressed by the officers of the law to effect this. Where is the precious child?"

"I presume," Clinton answered, "that she is where I left her, at Miss Bolton's seminary."

The doctor was a judge of human nature—what doctor is not? He beholds it in its nakedness, he sees it when disrobed of conventionalities, and when it has been warped by diseases which sin and folly have occasioned; when suffering has laid bare the passions and intensified their evil. He has also watched at the bed of anguish, and remarked how it has exalted the affections

and purified the soul for that immortality toward which it drifted.

He looked searchingly at Clinton; there was no trace of excess upon his classic face; there were no lines, save those furrowed by privation and by the sorrows of a sensitive soul.

Clinton's clear and steady eye met his gaze. "You would ask," he said, "why I have befriended this girl? In my opening career I formed the resolve to acknowledge by a bounty to some worthy object the blessing that had been accorded me. I met this child in pitiable surroundings. It was the opportunity I sought. Her noble assistance in the wayside encounter awakened gratitude and established a comradeship. I found her beautiful, graceful, talented, dependent. My heart was human; henceforth my interest was no longer unselfish. I sought to win her."

"It need not be asked if you have succeeded; the devotion on the battlefield attests it," the doctor rejoined. "You have won a wife, and I have found a daughter."

CHAPTER XXXV.

STILL COMRADES.

WHEN a carriage was driven to the seminary, and three gentlemen alighting, inquired for Miss Lucett, a sensation was created. It was a novelty even in the history of the music teacher, and Miss Bolton attached to it significance.

"This is Miss Lucett's hour for recreation," she said in response to the inquiry. "She has walked into the orchard; I will have her summoned."

She was about to depart for the purpose when Clinton begged:

"Permit me to go."

Having upon a memorable occasion learned the topography of that orchard, he anticipated no difficulty in the search.

"Your friend's face seems familiar," the principal remarked, by way of catching on to a clew.

"You have probably seen him," responded the doctor. "He informed me that upon a certain occasion he took tea at this house; circumstances, however, required an informal departure." The old gentleman then recalled the incident of the Confederate prisoner.

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Miss Bolton, "and to this day we have not found out how he escaped."

Meanwhile, among the avenues of the orchard, Clinton espied a graceful figure, and quickened his steps. An alert ear heard them, and in another instant the

tried and true were locked in an embrace; he feeling that he enfolded what was dearest to him, and she enjoying the assurance that in his arms there was rest and refuge.

"I knew," she said, "when the war was over that I should soon see you."

"Yes, my darling, during the weary months since we parted you have been the star of hope. Now that hope is realized, I have good news. In the accidents of war I have found for you a father worthy of such a daughter, and I have crossed swords with his son, a dashing officer, whom I spared because he was so very like yourself."

Alida was startled. "I knew," she said, "from your assurances, and from the feelings that have stirred my own soul since I grew to be a woman, that I could not be the child of those who reared me; but I have grown reconciled to my mystery and contented to find in you all combined, parents, lover, and *dear old guardian*," she added with a laugh. "You have been everything to me, and I have determined that my life shall be all in all to you. My debt of gratitude is great."

"It is not your gratitude for which my heart is yearning; that has many times been cancelled. It is your love I want."

"You have it, and earlier than you knew of. I have loved you since the morning that you gave that cross, and I stood at the bars and listened to your horse's step on the path. The sound fell heavily upon my ear, and found a mournful echo in my heart. I did not know then what it was, but oh! it has intensified, and now our hearts are one."

"I have long felt that it must be so, darling; and I may now lead you to your father without the dread that he will take you from me."

As they entered the parlor Alida's flushed face caused her to look radiantly beautiful. The doctor seized her hand and held her before him. His searching gaze was trying, but he quickly drew her to him as he fervently said: "Yes, 'tis she! Found! found at last! How like her mother! I see her, as I led her to the altar." He bowed his head and wept.

It was an impressive scene. Miss Bolton withdrew discreetly. She knew that she had sustained a loss that was irreparable, but with a Christian heart she rejoiced that the sunshine of happiness was to enter a life that had long been shadowed.

"Now, let me take a look," the captain said, as his father released Alida, and he conducted his blushing sister to the mirror. "Let us compare faces. Yes, you are pretty, that's certain; but how could you be otherwise, if you're like me? I believe Captain Grason is right about it; you really are, and how fortunate! else my beauty would have been spoiled by a saber cut."

"Brother is not given to bashfulness," laughed Alida, "and at this rate we shall soon be well acquainted."

These pleasantries restored cheerfulness, and Alida, seating herself beside her father, stroked his wrinkled hand, as she said: "So you are the dear doctor who was so kind to me?"

"Yes," he replied; "and to think I did not recognize you on the field! But it was almost dark, and afterward I was busy; but what do we not owe to our rebel patient?"

Clinton had been an interested observer of this family reunion. With natural modesty he replied: "It is more than balanced, for where would the patient have been but for the nurse and the doctor?"

As a result of this interview Miss Bolton again journeyed to Washington to consult with Mr. Molray, and

Alida was taken to her home on the Hudson, which only her infant eyes had seen. But her sojourn was short; she had merely been loaned to her father, for he who felt that he had the right of conquest came to claim her, arriving in a special car with an army of invaders from Maryland and Virginia, so the doctor killed the fattened calf and surrendered at discretion.

Leila, as a bridesmaid, fairly represented Southern grace. Edith bore with what grace she could the ceremony which made another "Mistress of the Glen." The elder Grason protested that his rebel son was not deserving of half so nice a wife, and the amiable mother marveled what sympathy could have existed between the mountain maid and the dignified Clinton. Genial Father Littig, as he offered his congratulations, whispered to the groom: "'He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall.'"

Clinton bore amiably the friendly taunt, happy in his power to retort: "'Where, my kind 'prophet of the soul,' is now your convert?"

After the wedding, from a landing adjacent to Dr. Welton's the bridal party boarded the day boat on the Hudson, and Alida's love of scenery was soon captivated by the beautiful Highlands and the winding river, as they glided toward the great city that guards its entrance. There they boarded the ocean liner that bore them down the lovely bay and out on the Atlantic. where, with the freshening sea, there came to Alida's expanding mind new revelations of nature's grandeur as she was dazzled by the mirror of shimmering silver, or looked out on the boundless bosom of blue. The calm, the gale, the light, the shadow, the golden glitter of the noonday sun, or the silvery path of the moon's pale ray, each in turn afforded variety and charm.

When at last the pier at Liverpool was reached Lord

Kilray and Mr. Merryfield were there to extend an English welcome, and after a season of hospitality to speed them on their European tour. When this was ended they returned to the Glen, where Sally gloried as caterer in the grandest event of her life; for her young "mister," contrary to her prediction, actually "sattled doon," where he and his long-loved Alida were still Comrades.

THE END.

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[S an American novel, just issued, of and for Americans and others, by an American author, John B. Powell, of Milwaukee, Wis. Once in a while something appears in novel literature stripped of the warp and weft of the mills of old and familiar romance. "What Sayest Thou?" has such a delightful quantity of different and fresh material, texture, color, and finish that, irresistibly, apprenticeship of reading soon becomes a permanent occupation, for phases of mental, moral, physical, social, political, and religious regimes, out of the ordinary, are seen in the life, character, and associations of a man of the common people. One phase is remarkable. A sweep of mind is shown which from its first activity promises imbecility, but as age adds to its strength, it broadens in striking brilliancy, at which, and the possibilities of the man, medical men will marvel but not dispute. Criticism will come from society people for the photographing of their inner realms, for "moral nudity," if there is such an exhibition, is uncovered, offending, however, only the excessively squeamish. Questions which have for centuries disturbed and still disturb the religious world are given fresh emphasis. American "machine" politics are thoroughly lubricated with the oil of actuality. American society and fraternal life are presented, concerning each and all of which the author shrewdly propounds the query, "What Sayest Thou"; but it is doubtful if readers will reply to the letter-chain in the title. Entirely new, novel, and original in fact, fiction, and romance, is the introduction of ancient and modern secret societies to the class of literature to which the book belongs. It is evident that the author is a ritualist and a memorist and an authority not to be disputed; and nowhere is this more apparent than in his description of the "Ancient Egyptian Rite of the Memphian Shrine." All these phases are brought out in the life and character and associations of plain, simple John Rodman and Mary, his wife, a village girl, well educated, of well-to-do parents, who, braving ridicule, contempt, and advice, marries and meets fate with the man of her choice. The son of these two and his wife, the beautiful daughter of a wealthy and distinguished Mexican, are clearly real and living; in fact, many of the characters are so real that even fictitious names scarcely conceal their identity. There is also a graceful failure to screen the fact that Mr. Powell is, or has been, a newspaper editor, writer, and reporter; yet he must be credited with a style and strength of thought and construction that reaches finish and perfection. In these respects he has greatly improved upon his "Surrendered," "The Minister's Lodge," and other works, the most pleasing improvement being an avoidance of all heavy or labored sentences. The story is built upon a solid foundation of substantial material, neatly finished in its exterior and interior, and just commodious enough to move about in with ease, comfort, and interest. The book is charming, will last and become popular, but may encounter the critics notwithstanding it will attract and interest all classes and professions.

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[S a striking work of imagination. It is based upon the novel and truly extraordinary subject of the "science of sensations," and abounds in bizarre situations and effects. It is the story of Archibald Danvers, a young man of æsthetic tastes, gifted—or rather cursed—with what the author describes as "ultra-sensitiveness," and who, in his hunt for happiness, through illusion, aided by the "science of sensations," as revealed to him by old Peter Zadowski, its eccentric exponent, is led on to moral perdition. A mysterious herb supposed to be in Zadowski's possession, and which Danvers vainly seeks to procure, is one of the chief causes of the latter's demoralization and is indirectly the cause of a miracle under peculiarly sensational circumstances. Danvers realizes that illusion, even when developed to a fine art and aided by the science of sensation, cannot be sustained indefinitely, is not all-sufficing; and desires the herb as a last resort when he shall have wrung out of existence all that there is of illusion and pleasure of the senses in it. For the herb is no ordinary vegetable and there is no comparison between its effects and those of opium or haseesh: "It is unknown to modern science. Mundane joys lose their savor and have no further interest for those who have sniffed it. They will have none of them, despising even the wiles of women. In fact, they are filled with aversion for mere mortal syrens, even those whom they previously held dear, and for whom they would have stooped to any folly. A person desirous of committing hari-kari could shuffle off this mortal coil in spasms of bliss by absorbing a piece of the herb no bigger than the head of a pin." His burglarious search for it in Zadowski's house one night brings him in contact with the scientist's daughter Ruth, a strange, unique character. The meeting is fraught with fateful consequences that must be read in their natural sequence to be appreciated. Not the least artistic episode in the story is the description by Zadowski of the pleasures that can be evoked by the contemplation of jewels; and the explanation of their origin by the old æsthete is particularly fanciful. Here are a few instances:

"These pale opals, gems of mystery and mourning, are the tears that fishers lured to their doom by the heartless syrens shed, and that the kiss of the moonbeams froze as they fell." "Diamonds are shooting stars that showered from the trail of the Pleiades when the seven sisters were borne on high to grace the breast of the bull in the Zodiac." "Topazes are grain shed from the bouquet of Ceres." "Carbuncles are embers that dropped from the Empyrean when Satan and his hosts were hurled from the ethereal sky with hideous combustion down to bottomless perdition." And the old man, in his excitement, concluding his description, exclaims: "Pearls, diamonds, sapphires, topazes, amethysts, emeralds, rubies, opals, carbuncles—I shake them from the trees in Aladdin's magic garden, I gather them into glittering mountains, I strew them over the universe as dew for the flowers, I scoop them up in handfuls and fling them into the air, into the glorious sunshine; they stream down again off the rainbow in dazzling torrents of light and fire, and I catch them in cups of beryl, chrysobery, turquoise, sardonyx, jasper, crystal, moonstone, toadstone, sard, lapis lazuli, carnelian, coral, jet, and amber snatched from the banquet board of the gods!"

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OR

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